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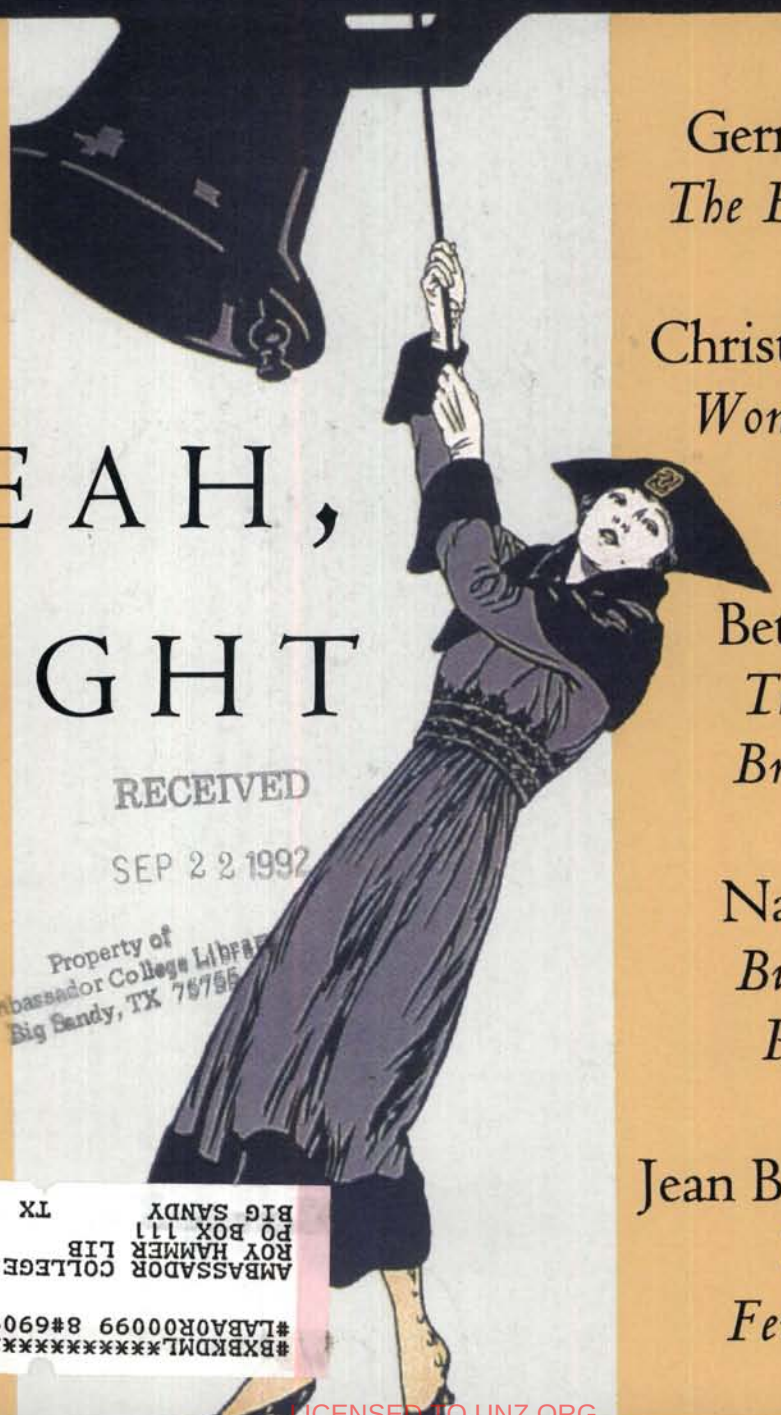

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OCTOBER 5, 1992

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Punctilious courtesy

To the editors:

I am aware that Carol Burke was a professor here at the Naval Academy for seven years, but her views were obviously extremely limited ("Dames at Sea," August 17 & 24). Many of her alleged facts are outdated or simply incorrect. I say this based on having been at the Naval Academy as a company officer for the past year and also as a midshipman from 1981 to 1985. For example, "WUBA" was not first used as the acronym for "*Women's* Uniform Blue Alpha." The term stood for "*Working* Uniform Blue Alpha," a short-sleeve fall and spring uniform worn by both male and female midshipmen that existed long before women arrived at the Naval Academy.

As for Burke's described cadences, I am not sure where she picked them up, but there is not one that I have heard with the words she uses during any of my association with the Naval Academy. The Hog Log to which she referred did cease to exist a few years ago and does not continue unofficially. As a side note, however, the comments in it were "equal opportunity," made toward both male and female dates. With regard to the "brick award," it too has stopped and was an "equal opportunity" antic—many female midshipmen got "bricked" for their less desirable dates just as the male mids were for their female dates. The banana sticker was also done away with; most of the junior mids I have questioned about it do not even know to what I am referring.

CYNTHIA M. THEBAUD
Lieutenant, U.S. Navy

To the editors:

During my three years at the Naval Academy I have witnessed incidents of crude, discriminatory, and sexist behavior that have appalled and embarrassed me. I have not, however, ignored this sort of behavior. Midshipmen are held accountable for their actions, and misconduct is punished severely, especially in the areas of equal opportunity, sexual harassment, and mutual respect.

We at the Naval Academy are committed to building upright citizens and officers of the highest caliber to serve in the Navy and Marine Corps. John Paul Jones, one of the first officers of the U.S. Navy, said: "It is by no means enough that an officer of the Navy should be a capable mariner. He must be that, of course, but also a great deal more. He should be as well a gentleman of liberal education, refined manners, punctilious courtesy, and the nicest sense of personal honor. He should be the soul of tact, patience, justice, firmness, and charity.... In one word, every commander should keep constantly before him the great truth that to be well obeyed, he must be perfectly esteemed." Every midshipman is required to memorize these words during his or her first summer. I know I speak for the entire Brigade of Midshipmen when I say that those words are deeply meaningful. We have dedicated our lives to the service and defense of this country, and we stand ready to inherit the awesome responsibility that awaits us.

SCOTT A. COOPER
Midshipman First Class, U.S. Navy

To the editors:

So blistering was Carol Burke's recounting of Navy rhymes on rape-murder, etc., that I have to ask: At what point do the ostensible vehicles of analysis of hate speech themselves become a means of further, and vastly wider, assault? Woman author and correct hand-wringing notwithstanding, this article felt every bit as victimhood-reinforcing as the worst Tailhook drunk—and as such more a contribution, yet again, to the problem than the solution. Ditto your seeming cluelessness on the point.

Or maybe you *would* have run just as exhaustive a collection of somebody's poetry if its subject had been the graphic sexual battery of, say, male political magazine guys.

SUSAN SHARP
Washington, D.C.

Sucked up

To the editors:

Hey, let's play fair. If the extract you cite from a recent *Time* article of mine is worthy of your weekly Clinton Suck-Up Watch, so be it. I strongly disagree, but hell, my work is fair game.

What I bitterly resent, however, is the way that you took a quote that I had given to *The Washington Post* and wrenched it completely out of context to make it seem like I was referring to myself. Contrary to your erroneous implication, I "confessed" to no sins (journalistic or otherwise), nor do I consider myself one of those reporters who nurture a secret desire to "play Ben

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Bradlee to Bill Clinton's Jack Kennedy."

To further dispel the dastardly charge of sycophancy, I freely offer the following Shermanesque statement: if invited to a White House state dinner, I will not attend. If dragged there, I will not eat.

WALTER SHAPIRO
New York, New York

Conservative values

To the editors:

John Judis tiptoes up to the central contradiction in the Republican coalition and then backs away ("The End of Conservatism," August 31). Fundamentalists believe that "traditional" values should be maintained, even if that maintenance requires governmental intervention. Free-marketeers believe that, whatever state of affairs is produced by the actions of the market, that is how things ought to be allowed to remain.

On the theme of "family values," it is largely the unrestrained actions of the market that have necessitated the two-wage-earner pattern that has put the "traditional" family under such strain. Free-marketeers, confronted with such strains, can only respond (if true to their beliefs) that "this is the reality of present conditions." Fundamentalists rage against this non-traditional conception of the family and demand that government advocate a return to a single-earner model validated by tradition and experience.

Ironically, the Clinton formula of federally financed training for wages high enough for one parent to support a family could return us to the single-earner model. The fundamentalists' true interests (as opposed to their ideology) lie with the Clinton Democrats. Ideology forecloses their embrace due to the unspoken Clinton premise that the "earner" supporting the complementary "nurturer" might be the mother, or the unmarried father or mother, or (true horror!) one of the two mothers or fathers.

BILL HUBBARD JR.
Boston, Massachusetts

:he editors:

There was much to disagree with in John Judis's article, but his statement that "conservatives were silent between June 1990 ... and October, when the first budget agreement was introduced" was just plain wrong. During this time Heritage alone published no fewer than fifteen papers examining budget studies. At the Heritage Foundation there is a conservative vision, a conservative domestic policy, and a conservative and "coherent national agenda." Judis just ignored them.

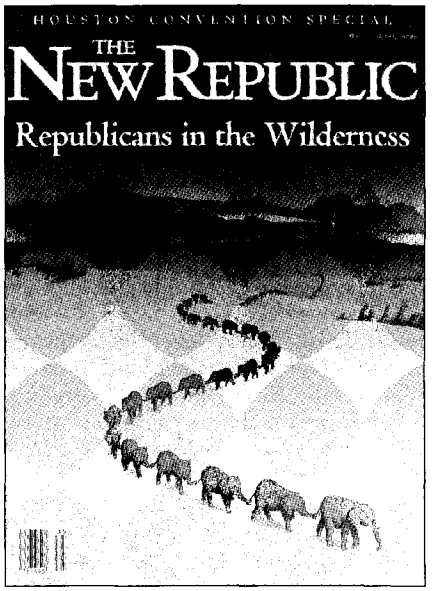
HUGH C. NEWTON
The Heritage Foundation
Washington, D.C.

Gringoed

To the editors:

As pleased as I was to see Robert Leiken's review of my book ("The Revision Thing," August 31), I must take issue with a couple of his points.

Leiken writes that after covering the war in Nicaragua for six years, I returned with my "ideological presuppositions intact." Nothing could be further from the truth. I am neither a Republican nor a conservative, as the exasperated edi-



tors for whom I worked at *The Washington Times* will heartily attest. When I first went to Central America in 1983, I was quite skeptical about the Reagan administration's claims about the Sandinistas. Like Leiken, I spent a good deal of time talking to Nicaraguan peasants; like Leiken, I changed my mind.

Leiken accuses me of being too soft on Enrique Bermudez, who commanded the largest contra army. Bermudez was no saint. But his accomplishments are undeniable. The CIA lavished money on several contra forces, including those of Eden Pastora, Fernando Chamorro, and various Miskito Indian leaders. In most cases they got far more U.S. aid per soldier than Bermudez did. Yet every other contra army collapsed in discord and defeat. Only the army commanded by Bermudez grew and prospered. How was this possible if Bermudez was the thieving, whoring brute that Leiken describes?

Leiken may not agree with me, but the Sandinistas clearly did. Fearing that another contra army might coalesce around Bermudez and challenge the gangster shadow government they have built around Violeta Chamorro, the Sandinistas murdered Bermudez in February 1990.

Lastly—and I have rarely felt myself on such firm ground in debating a critic—Leiken inadvertently shifted the name of my book into the present tense. The correct title is *Everybody Had His Own Gringo: The CIA and the Contras.*

GLENN GARVIN
Coral Gables, Florida

Mush mouth

To the editors:

As a qualified neurologist who sees patients daily that suffer from various aphasias due to strokes and other neurological disorders, I was entertained by Jesse Furman's "The Speech Thing" (July 17 & 24). I must take exception, however, to his unwarranted partisanship, since he implies that this disorder afflicts only Republican presidents. How can he forget that memorable Democrat, the modern mush mouth of the Midwest, Mayor Richard J. Daley of Chicago?

Generations of Chicagoans have fond memories of the late mayor's recurrent assassination attempts on the English language. His comments are so memorable that they've been recorded and archived for posterity. Daley's lack of articulation, however, was very selective. He had been in fact, a good student in school, majoring, I believe, in English. Daley did not want to appear as an intelligent, shrewd, powerful ward committeeman who threw elections around at a local or even national level. This might scare off some voters. Instead, he presented himself as the good soul, the simple man of the people, a well-meaning, bumbling nitwit who could complete a sentence successfully only with the greatest of effort. Reagan and Bush are simply variations on the same theme. Their confabulatory rhetorical style attempts to take the edge off their personalities, which would otherwise appear ruthless, aggressive, and politically unattractive.

JAMES REX MILLER III
Fellow, American Academy of Neurology
Chicago, Illinois

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FROM WASHINGTON

Revisionist history

"I went along with one Democratic tax increase, and I'm not going to do it again—ever, ever." —George Bush, 1992

"Oceania was at war with Eastasia: Oceania had always been at war with Eastasia. A large part of the political literature of five years was now completely obsolete." —George Orwell, *1984*

Of all George Bush's campaign fabrications, possibly the most audacious and certainly the most central is his conceit that the Democratic Congress forced him ("with my back to the wall") to break his no-new-taxes pledge. This contention raises Bush's favorite issue—"trust"—in two different ways.

First, the assertion itself is dishonest, and the dishonesty is especially striking since it concerns events that occurred on the public stage just two years ago. The cynicism is at once offensive and comic—reminiscent of Groucho's famous line, "Who are you going to believe: me or your own two eyes?"

Second, Congress-forced-me is Bush's only defense against the charge that he is already a proven betrayer of the voters' trust. What Bush actually said in 1988 was, "Congress will push me to raise taxes, and I'll say no, and they'll push, and I'll say no, and they'll push again, and I'll say to them, 'Read my . . . '" etc. etc. etc. So, even if true, Congress-forced-me isn't much of a defense. But it's all Bush has to clothe his nakedness on this subject.

And unlike Bush's other fictions, this one goes to the main issue in the campaign: his economic stewardship. Dan Quayle and other Bush surrogates have taken to blaming the recession on that 1990 tax increase. The contention is absurd (the increase was about $25 billion a year in a $6 trillion economy), but if that's their line, responsibility for the tax increase becomes *especially* crucial. Let's go to the videotape.

According to *Marching in Place* (Simon and Schuster), a new book about the Bush presidency by Michael Duffy and Dan Goodgame of *Time* magazine, Bush and his advisers were figuring how to get out of the no-new-taxes pledge from the very start of the administration. The basic strategy all along was to make it appear that Bush was "dragged kicking and screaming" by Democrats in Congress. It's a story line they've stuck to, but the facts don't support it.

In January 1990 Bush proposed his fiscal 1991 budget. It called for $1.2 trillion in spending and claimed a deficit of $65 billion. This was based on wildly optimistic economic assumptions (growth of more than 3 percent in 1991 and 1992). Hilariously, in light of the subsequent fuss, even this original Bush budget called for $14 billion in new taxes and fees. In April and May the House and Senate budget committees approved budgets of their own, using the president's economic assumptions. Congress's total proposed spending was exactly the same as Bush's—$1.2 trillion—though the details differed.

But in 1990 the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings law was still in effect. That law called for automatic across-the-board spending cuts if the projected deficit was above a certain amount. The ceiling for fiscal '91 (beginning October 1, 1990) was $74 billion. In the early months of 1990, it became clear that Bush's projected $65 billion deficit was a fantasy, and that meeting the Gramm-Rudman target might require across-the-board cuts of as much as $100 billion (even if the savings and loan bailout was excluded from the calculation). Since most entitlements, defense personnel, and interest on the debt were excluded, that would have meant cutting the rest of the government by something like 40 percent.

At this point, George Bush had four choices. He could have allowed the Gramm-Rudman chopper to go to work—an option recommended, with false bravado, by some conservatives. He could have proposed $100 billion in additional spending cuts of his own to meet the Gramm-Rudman targets. He could have called for repeal of Gramm-Rudman and abandoned all pretense at deficit cutting. Or he could have done what he did on May 6, a Sunday, and called congressional leaders to what became grandly known as the Budget Summit. The summiteers quickly agreed that pruning the deficit by $50 billion in 1991 (and $500 billion over five years) would be sufficient to hide their shame at abandoning Gramm-Rudman. The question was how.

The Democrats were not stupid. Or not too stupid. It was clear Bush wanted it to appear that they had "forced" him to raise taxes. They never did "make him beg" for it, as urged in this column. But they did engage in an elaborate ritual of "After you, Alfonse." At first they settled for a mantra of "No preconditions." But after some indiscreet remarks by chief of staff John Sununu, they insisted on an explicit statement from Bush that a tax increase would be necessary. He provided one on June 26. (Quayle has claimed repeatedly that—in some weird bending of the fourth dimension—this June 26 concession was necessitated by Saddam Hussein's August 2 invasion of Kuwait.)

The Democratic insistence that Bush formally renounce his no-new-taxes pledge was not a quid pro quo for spending cuts, as Bush likes to maintain. It was the price of agreeing to the tax increases themselves. The key point is that Bush never proposed spending cuts that would have made a tax increase unnecessary. That is why his "back to the wall." Bush made a political calculation that there would be less public resistance to a small tax increase than to deeper spending cuts.

During the negotiations, Bush preened about his willingness to "Take the heat. Take the hit. . . . You have to govern. You have to lead." And he didn't merely accept the final deal—he knocked heads to get it through Congress. When he signed it on November 5, Bush praised it as "an important measure for ensuring America's long-term economic growth." He did not mention that it would cause a recession. Two days later, he was already saying he had "serious regrets" about being "forced" into the deal by Congress.

According to the *1990 Congressional Quarterly Almanac* (from which this chronology derives), "By any measure the deficit-reduction bill was the most ambitious effort ever to turn the tide of federal spending." And Congress has kept to the spending limits prescribed in the bill. Yet George Bush, who could take legitimate credit for this accomplishment, denounces it instead.

This history casts doubt on the wishful thinking of some of my journalistic betters, such as George Will and David Broder, that there may even be a serious philosophical dispute at the heart of the current election campaign. Journalists, often accused of being obsessed with the "horse race" aspect of politics, are in fact suckers for "ideas" and see them even when they aren't there.

The notion in this case is that Bill Clinton represents the philosophy of using the government to promote economic prosperity while George Bush represents the philosophy of keeping government out of the way. Bill Clinton certainly has a reasonably coherent argument about how to use the government in new ways, and George Bush certainly talks about smaller government and lower taxes. The trouble with the theory is that when George Bush actually had a chance to choose smaller government and lower taxes, he chose the opposite. And no one forced him to.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

OCTOBER 5, 1992

MISSING LINK

"U.S. government wants to sedate Black youth." This headline, in a black-oriented Washington weekly called *News Dimensions*, is part of the publicity that recently led the National Institutes of Health to withdraw funding for a conference on heredity and criminal behavior. As a result, the conference, scheduled for mid-October at the University of Maryland, has been canceled. It's a sad and disgraceful descent into craven racial politics. The episode exhibits several troubling themes: paranoia among many blacks; the surprising cowardice of the NIH; and time-honored confusion about biology and behavior.

Part of the muddle is the conflation of "genetic" and "biological." If the government really does want to identify and "sedate" crime-prone youths—black or white—it can do so without the help of conferences like this one. Such youths are easy to spot (they're the ones in handcuffs), and sedatives are available. But this has no special connection with genetics. The fact that some kids have a disposition toward wrongdoing says nothing about whether genes or early environment did the disposing. Neither does any responsiveness to chemical therapy. All behavioral influences, environmental and genetic, are biologically mediated, and thus all behavioral tendencies are in principle subject to chemical intervention. As pharmacology advances, society will increasingly face questions about the chemical treatment of criminals, and of playground troublemakers—but it will face them regardless of whether criminals and troublemakers are born or made.

A second confusion involves genes and race. (Actually, nothing in the conference's literature implied anyone would talk about race. But charges of bigotry are routinely leveled at people who dare use the words "gene" and "behavior" in the same breath.) Young black men in America are more prone to crime than young white men. And individuals probably do differ in their genetic inclination toward aggression, impulsiveness, and other traits correlated with crime. Do these facts together suggest that the high black crime rate lies partly in "black genes"? The answer should be obvious—no, genetic differences among individuals don't imply aggregate differences between groups—but it's worth elaboration.

A five-minute visit to your local underclass neighborhood will leave you with no shortage of non-genetic explanations for the black crime rate. Indeed, given the family structures, the menu of role models, the state of inner-city schools, the bleak economic options and perverse incentives, and so on, it would be weird if black ghettos *weren't* fountains of crime. The American "black gene pool" (if so simple a term can be applied to something that is in fact quite variegated) didn't change appreciably between the 1950s, when black crime wasn't a mammoth problem, and today, when it is. What changed was the environment.

Assume, for a moment, the worst-case scenario—the most depressing and politically uncomfortable news about race that could emerge from the study of genes and crime: suppose scientists found a non-trivial statistical difference in the genetic underpinnings of crime between black and white populations. What would happen?

Certainly nothing *should* happen. Equal treatment before the law is an ideal whose logic transcends both the fact that people are different and the source of those differences. Whatever your color, whatever your genes, you're not a criminal until you've committed a crime. (The idea that we could ever give infants "gene tests" and say that they will or won't become criminals *regardless* of their upbringing betrays an unspeakably crude idea of how genes and environment interact.)

What of the distant, Huxleyan fears of eugenics? In the worst-case scenario, mightn't the government limit the reproductive options of blacks? Obviously, the government should stay out of the business of coercive eugenics. But biotechnology is rendering centralized eugenics obsolete anyway. Parents will one day be able to check embryos (or eggs fertilized in vitro) for behaviorally relevant genes and then decide about abortion (or reimplantation). Eventually, direct manipulation of sex cells—genetic engineering—may give parents much finer tailoring tools. Which manipulations are moral, which legal, and which of the legal ones are covered by government health insurance are massively dicey issues. But in any event, the most likely complaint of blacks will not be that they're subjected to eugenics, but that they're excluded from it—that, being disproportionately poor, black parents often lack the options richer parents exercise.

The truth about genes and human behavior, whatever it may be, is coming. The cancellation of a conference to investigate the subject was a cowardly denial of this reality. We suggest that aspiring defenders of black and any other interests muster the sobriety and moral courage to discern the real issues as they arise. •

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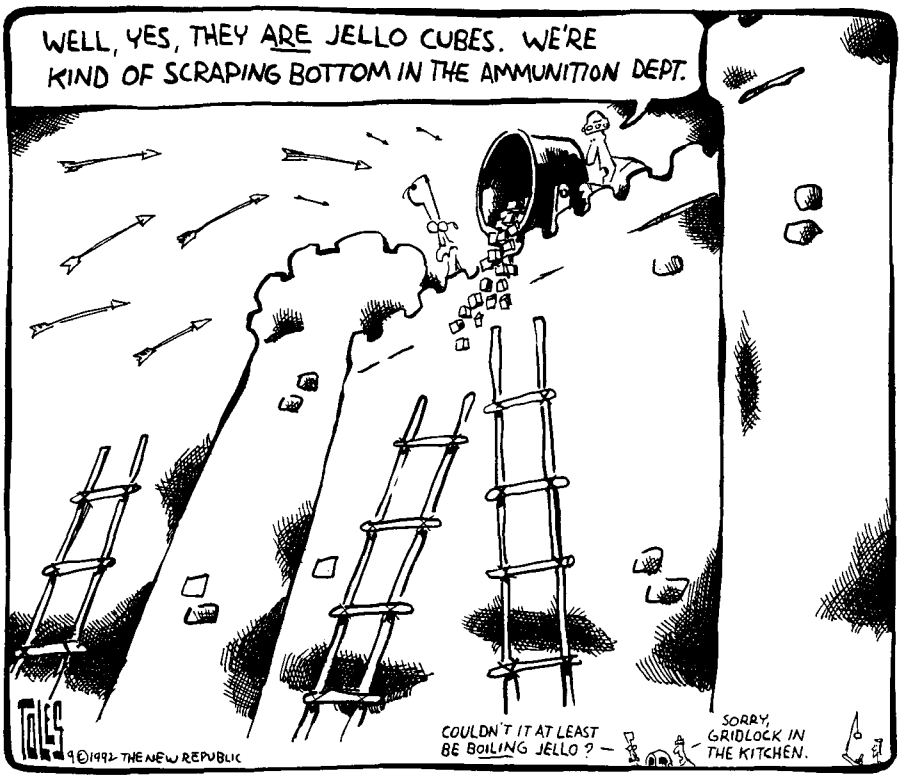
NOTEBOOK

BUSHISM OF THE WEEK: "No, we've taken—we're taking steps to fund it [the Overseas Private Investment Corporation]. Because I think when you create more export market—OPIC—and that's exactly what it does—you create more jobs in this country. In this sick and anemic country, which has had—incidentally, has grown for the last five ... [audio technical difficulties]—Hey, just a minute, I haven't finished yet." —at an "Ask George" session, Collegeville, Pennsylvania, September 9

CLINTON-GORE SUCK-UP WATCH: "... Having published a best-selling book on a serious subject, the environment, and having assumed a major role within the party on international affairs because of his strong support for the Persian Gulf war, Mr. Gore has developed enough confidence not to worry that he and his wife always look 'serious' in public.... On one long flight, Mr. Gore surprised and entertained reporters with his imitation of James Brown, rousing some from their sleep with shouts of 'I feeeeeel good!'" —Steven A. Holmes, *The New York Times*, September 14


WELL, YES, THEY ARE JELLO CUBES. WE'RE KIND OF SCRAPING BOTTOM IN THE AMMUNITION DEPT.
COULDN'T IT AT LEAST BE BOILING JELLO ? —
SORRY, GRIDLOCK IN THE KITCHEN.
TOLES
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NO SURPRISE: The "December Surprise" has gone from being a prediction to a scheduled event without ever stopping to be a scandal. As first reported in these pages ("December Surprise" by Michael Waldman, June 29), bank takeovers by federal regulators have mysteriously slowed during the election year but can be expected to return with a vengeance after the election. Soon after the article was published, FDIC chair William Taylor acknowledged that takeovers would indeed shoot up after the election. "The December Surprise is like the surprise that comes down the chimney at the end of the year," he told a group of bankers. "It may be a surprise to some, but not to those who have been around." Taylor's candor was cut short by his untimely death in August. So were his efforts to spare taxpayers the expense of the looming disaster. On September 15 the FDIC board voted to rescind the premium increase Taylor had pushed through to force banks to pay for their own bailout.

HELP UNWANTED: The government of Somalia, such as it is, has announced it will turn back any food and medical relief coming from Israel. Thousands of Muslims are dying each day but, thanks be to Allah, the boycott against the Jews still stands.

SIGN OF THE TIMES: *The New York Times* endorsed Elizabeth Colon, one of five Hispanic candidates, against Representative Stephen Solarz, a nine-time incumbent, who lost on September 15. (So did Colon.) This choice was not made, however, because the editors found fault with Solarz. It was because Colon's aspirations "better accord with the spirit in which this district was created ... to empower minority voters." It was an odd argument for electing someone. Time was, a free and fair election was regarded as empowerment enough. And by this logic, of course, there are districts that ought to be represented only by Hispanics, others only by blacks, still others only by Asians, etc. One worry: if there are major urban centers where whites form a minority, should districts be carved out to empower them as well? And would *The New York Times* endorse them?

AND I STILL HAVEN'T READ ROE V. WADE:
Q. Who are your favorite Supreme Court justices historically?
A. You know, I would not hazard a guess. You like some for various reasons. I just really haven't drawn any conclusions on that. I have things about any number of them that I like but I think I'll reserve judgment on that until I've been here a while and I think I have a better basis to make that determination. Maybe when I'm interviewed when I'm about to leave here, hopefully I'll be here for a little while ..." —Clarence Thomas,

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quoted in *The Docket Sheet*, a publication of the Public Information Office of the Supreme Court

BILL COME LATELY: It's a little overdue, but even William F. Buckley Jr. is now in favor of gay rights. In a column written last week, Buckley endorses anti-discrimination protection for homosexuals in public and private employment (except for teachers). He's also in favor of admitting open homosexuals and lesbians into the military: "There is simply no record of distinctive gay vulnerability in these services to justify categorical, as distinguished from particular, exclusions. If America can survive the tenure of a commander in chief suffering from first-degree satyriasis, presumably a gay sergeant who obeys military regulations shouldn't endanger the republic." Quite right. Buckley's defection to reason is a welcome sign that intelligent conservatives can find no principled reason to oppose a modicum of civil equality for homosexuals. Here's hoping others—including Messrs. Bush and Cheney—can see the light.

YOU BE THE JUDGE:
"He was for the individual over government, government over big business, and the environment over all else." —description of Justice William O. Douglas in *The Brethren* by Bob Woodward and Scott Armstrong

"His ideology was simple; government over business, the individual over government, the environment over everything." —description of "Justice Rosenberg," a character in John Grisham's recent novel, *The Pelican Brief*
(thanks to Christian T. Souza, Eastland, Texas)

128 AND COUNTING: One of Bill Clinton's supposed tax hikes that George Bush keeps complaining about was the imposition of a $5 fee for a change-of-sex certificate. Does that mean the Republicans want more gender-benders in Arkansas? •

THE SHRUB FILE

HALCION DAYS

By Douglas G. McGrath

Wednesday, August 12, 1992

Agents Banks and I had a scare tonight. About 1 a.m. the door to personal quarters opened. It was Mrs. Shrub. She was wearing some kind of sleeping shorts and a terry cloth shirt that said, "Age Is Not Important Unless You Are A Cheese." Banks jerked back so hard he dented the wainscoting. "What's the matter, ma'am?" I asked while Banks picked up the splinters. "He's missing again," she said.

We found him at the horseshoe pit. He was doing shots of white wine spritzer with Halcion chasers. He was very agitated. "Lot of talk around, lot of tongue-wagging going on from those spear-chuckers up on Capitol Hill up there that—people are—can't hardly throw a horseshoe without some spear splitting it in half—they're saying that the Bush goose is cooked. That's true—I'm very—carping little liberal media—they say—everybody wants debates!" He went on as we tried to get him to come back in. "Mr. Elvis-Oxford-smarty-pants! Well, while he was learning the ABCs of debate in some rumpus room at Eton, I was—I was busy—American boys and guys and men were cashing in their chips in Vietnam! And I would have been one of them if—Hey, Duker!—if I hadn't already been born before. Everyone—everybody says I'm afraid of debates cause I want a lot of moderators—hey, Banksie-boy! But let's look at the full part of the glass: I think it makes me look more moderate."

Friday, August 21

Crisco is back as chief of staff. Ms. Tutwiler threw a welcome back barbecue for him where they had burgers and dogs and burned Mr. Skinner's personal things. But after that, it was back to business. And Crisco is tough! Starting today, the vice-Shrub can only be let out of his office with a key that Crisco wears on a chain inside his pants.

He convened a meeting to discuss polls. Mr. Teeter said the Shrub is in trouble because people want change. The Shrub said, "Hey, we're golden! Didn't I change my position on taxes and abortion? Didn't Bar and I change our residence so we don't have to pay any federal every April 15?"

Mr. Teeter said he meant that people want an outsider. The Shrub got that pinched look and his voice cracked as if he were going to cry. "But Teet-head," he said. "I *am* an outsider! Where do you think I'm always playing golf?" Crisco told the Shrub to go work on his thank-you notes.

Sunday, August 23

Crisco has unveiled his 50-Day Save the Shrub plan. A couple of pages fell loose in the car, and Banks and I took them so we could see if Crisco's as good as they say. Here are some highlights:

Day 1: Fire the bulk of Skinner's staff. Let the surviving staff know that low morale was what got the other people fired. That should get morale up. Then call media and leak stories about how high morale is now that I'm back.

Day 2: Leak to the press that Clinton's bus is a Dodge. This will revive the draft issue in people's minds.

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Day 3: Follow up to make sure media's getting what they need for stories about the indispensable job I'm doing. Staff should stress that I am drafting an important new domestic agenda so they will have plenty of time to tell media that this is a nearly impossible situation but I'm doing my best. If I have to come back in '96 to finish the job the right way, so be it.

Day 4: Send Quayle to visit coma ward. Have him refuse to answer questions because he doesn't want "to wake anyone up."

Day 5: See if Quayle's ready to drop off ticket yet thanks to all the trouble he's caused with his coma remark.

Day 6: Have president reveal part one of our new plan, "Heaving Off Our Economic Yoke" (HOOEY). He should announce some kind of a jobs-creation program. What about announcing a plan to get unemployment down by counting the people who are getting unemployment checks as being employed? They spend a long time in an office filled with incompetents before they get their check. That sounds like employment to me. (If this doesn't fly, leak that it was Darman's idea.)

Day 7: There's been so much attention given to that nauseating story about Al Gore saving his son who was hit by a car. What if we had someone from the CIA disguised as a driver hit Neil Bush with a car? And the president could rescue him? (Actually, once you've been involved in the S&L scandal, people *want* you to be hit by a car. Maybe it's better if we hit one of the little brown ones?) The president could rescue him, someone could just happen to videotape it, and the president could say, "This is what I'm going to do with the U.S. economy starting January One, Term Two. I'm going to pull it from underneath the wheels of the Democratic Congress and put it back on the road to recovery."

Day 8: Send Quayle to Africa for funeral of dignitary. If no dignitary died, tell him to wait.

Day 9: Any thought on how we might get Clinton's mother to endorse us?

Day 10: Have Millie write a book, "What the Clintons' Cat Told Me." Have the cat be named Gennifer. Have Clinton spend more time with Gennifer than with Hillary.

Day 12: Have another hurricane, and this time the president should respond immediately. Have all staff refer to him as the "On-Top-Of-The-Hurricane-Situation President."

Sunday, September 13

That Crisco is unbelievable. This is day twelve. And a hurricane hit Hawaii. Supplies hit the ground almost before the rain did. If he can schedule and spin hurricanes, maybe he really *can* save the Shrub. I sure hope so. How can you not like a guy who writes you a thank-you note every time you dislodge a Double-Stuff Oreo from his wife's throat?

DOUGLAS G. MCGRATH is a New York writer.

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

MAJOR MOMENT

By Fred Barnes

Two happy Englishmen appeared on September 9 at Bush-Quayle headquarters near the White House and drew a packed crowd to the conference room. Senior campaign officials, including chairman Robert Teeter and manager Fred Malek, showed up. Budget director Richard Darman came from the White House. The Englishmen—Mark Fullbrook, the Conservative Party's head of campaigning, and his predecessor, Sir John Lacy—were brimming with advice. They'd helped engineer the fourth straight victory for the Tories in last May's British election, an upset achieved despite a terrible economy, bad polls, the public's desire for change, and pale leadership by Prime Minister John Major. "The parallel is unbelievably strong," said a Bush official. Hearing how the Conservatives pilloried Neil Kinnock, Major's foe, and the Labour Party was "very uplifting," said another aide.

Actually the Bush high command didn't need the Brits' advice. They'd already decided to pursue the Tory strategy, namely change the race from a referendum on the past four years to one on who's got a better plan for the future. This isn't easy. Voters tend to judge a candidate by what he's done, and even a few White House advisers concede that by this yardstick Bush doesn't deserve re-election. So it's not enough for Bush merely to have a more appealing domestic program. The strategy has a second, highly negative part. At Bush headquarters the two Tories touted their slogan, "You Can't Trust Labour," and talked up a poster that said, "In Come Labour, Income Taxes." They were preaching to the choir. Trust and taxes have been Bush themes since midsummer.

The hardest part for Bush was packaging a plan. Without James Baker, who took over as White House chief of staff just before Labor Day, and Baker policy wonk Robert Zoellick, Bush might never have gotten it right. After all, he had tried three times this year—in his State of the Union address in January, his remarks while vetoing the Democrats' economic bill in March, and his acceptance speech in Houston in August—and failed to present a compelling, coherent economic vision. Pre-Baker, he was defensive, unsure whether to play up budding signs of economic recovery or admit hard times. His economic plan lacked an overarching theme. It was less than the sum of its parts.

Baker and Zoellick (and speechwriter Andy Ferguson) changed that. They embraced the supply-side vision of President Reagan, Jack Kemp, and Jim Pinkerton, the

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New Paradigm man. Explicitly rejected was the notion that raising taxes would help in any way. In spelling out the plan in Detroit on September 10, Bush declared, "Raising taxes won't cut the deficit." Whether Bush really believes this is another thing, but Baker may. After Bush's election in 1988, Baker spoke at a dinner honoring Kemp. He said Kemp had been "right" about cutting taxes, and doubters about supply-side economics like himself had been wrong. Of course there's another reason Baker steered Bush toward Kemponomics: it's the only port in the storm for Bush. The competing idea—deficit reduction—has no political appeal. Tax cuts, school choice, and legal reform do.

The Baker-Bush plan passed the threshold test that earlier versions had flunked, what a Bush adviser calls "the do-they-have-a-plan test." It managed this partly by being wrapped in a package labeled "entrepreneurial capitalism." This is a Kemp phrase, but Bush invoked it three times in his Detroit speech. And the plan also got a better hearing because it included a few new proposals. The new elements, particularly a cut in salary for top federal bureaucrats and downsizing of the White House staff, aren't much. Some aides argued that they were too trivial for inclusion in what Bush called "a very serious speech, serious business." But since pay and staff cuts are popular, they were added. "In a world of symbols, they communicate you're not pro-government," said a Bushie.

Fine, but the details of Bush's plan aren't his biggest problem. Credibility is. Having broken his no-new-taxes pledge in his first term, Bush has practically none. Yet he needs to make voters believe he'll really fight for tax and spending cuts and conservative reforms—in other words, that his second term will be radically different from his first. That's a tough sell, but not impossible. To gain credibility, Teeter and Darman want Bush to announce that Baker will stay as chief of staff (or become treasury secretary) until the economy is back on track. Baker is resisting. He'd rather be secretary of state again in a second Bush term. "Baker will come around," insisted a senior White House official. For now, Baker has his own tactic for making Bush credible. His favorite phrase is "repetition, repetition, repetition." Thus Bush repeats his litany of proposals for practically every audience. He told Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition on September 11 that he won't be "driven away" from discussing family values, a controversial theme that has failed to broaden Bush's support. Then he instantly dropped that subject and devoted his speech to his economic and domestic plan.

Having a positive plan is necessary but not sufficient for defeating Bill Clinton. It gets Bush to 40 percent. And Bush campaign polls are not encouraging about pulling in 10-plus percent more. Swing voters—Reagan Democrats, independents, non-liberal working women—have turned Bush off. They don't care about his plan. The only way to reach them is first to bring down Clinton by raising doubts about his trustworthiness and his agenda. "We need his credibility to be undermined to get a fair hearing on the policy differences," said a Bush adviser.

That leads directly to the draft, the issue that threatens to damage Clinton as surely as Tory attacks on Kinnock harmed Labour. In mid-September it was the Bush campaign's chief hope. The issue is a triple whammy, hurting Clinton three ways. First, voters who think Clinton is a draft dodger aren't likely to feel comfortable with him as commander in chief. Bush played on this when he spoke to the National Guard Association in Salt Lake City on September 15. He spoke of "the awful authority to send your sons and daughters into harm's way." Bush left it to others to raise the second aspect, Clinton's truthfulness. Clinton has contradicted himself repeatedly over the years—thirteen times, according to Bushies—in trying to knock down the idea that he got favored treatment in avoiding the Vietnam-era draft. Clinton's evasiveness has added to his reputation as Slick Willie, exactly the image of Clinton the Bush campaign is eager to reinforce. Third, there's the effect the draft issue has on Clinton's composure. He's extraordinarily poised, except when peppered with questions about draft dodging.

There's also a dilemma for Bush. He wants to keep the draft issue alive without seeming excessively negative or mean-spirited. "If we don't weigh in, the campaign will go on to other things," said a White House official. Lee Atwater, Bush's campaign manager in 1988, believed the way to draw attention to an issue, negative or positive, was to have the candidate raise it directly. Bush considered doing that in Salt Lake City, then thought better of it. But obviously Bush won't let the matter drop so easily. If there's a way to keep it front and center, Jim Baker will find it for him. •

Why the treaty deserves to die.

MAASTRICKEN

By Niall Ferguson

The people of Europe are in revolt—against Europe. To be precise, they are revolting against a treaty signed by their political leaders last December in a small Dutch town called Maastricht. The treaty—an enormous and often unintelligible document—has two main objectives: the creation, by the end of the decade, of a single European currency, managed by a European central bank; and the development of a common security and foreign policy. The widespread disdain for the treaty among Europeans is good news for democrats everywhere.

The discontent came gradually, and from unexpected quarters. The traditionally awkward customer, Britain, under the craven leadership of John Major, grumbled, but signed. Then six months later the unimaginable happened. In a referendum on the treaty thought to be a

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mere formality, the voters of Denmark narrowly rejected Maastricht. The contrasting reactions of ordinary people and the political elites of Europe to this vote were revealing. Politicians, pitting hope against fear, refused to acknowledge the significance of the outcome. True, the treaty required ratification by *all* member states and was therefore dead in theory. But that did not necessarily mean that it was dead in practice, they insisted. The people, on the other hand, were jubilant. Dinner parties from London to Lisbon were interrupted by ecstatic messengers bearing the news of the Dane vote.

Since then, political leaders have been struggling to salvage their Titanic. But alas, the more they struggle the faster it sinks. French President François Mitterrand deserves credit for blasting the biggest hole in the hull by announcing that there would be a referendum in France on Maastricht. The French would do the right thing and adopt the treaty, Mitterrand believed. Wrong again. Early polls showed 38 percent of those voters who had made up their minds would be voting against the treaty. By the end of August, the figure had risen to 50 percent. Now, days before the vote, there seems at least an even chance that the French will follow the Danish lead.

The mood within Europe's elite is one of panic. The lira has been devalued, Germany's mighty Bundesbank forced to make a quarter-point cut in its prime rate, the newspapers plastered with high-minded sentiment. Both Major and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl know that the treaty would be voted down if put to a vote in their countries. But still they struggle to avert the inevitable.

In the past, resistance to Maastricht was considered—both in the United States and in Europe—to be futile. Supporters pointed to the entrenchment of its institutions: an E.C. presidency; a European Court of Justice; a European Customs Union; a European Parliament and a kind of Upper House, the Council of Ministers; a European budget; a permanent bureaucracy (the Commission); and a currency unit of account, the ECU—to say nothing of an American-inspired flag (twelve gold stars on blue) and an unofficial European anthem in Beethoven's *Ode to Joy*. Yet the appearance of federalism as a fait accompli was deceptive. The E.C. presidency passes from one national government to another every six months; the budget is still a trifling thing at $85 billion, around 1.2 percent of E.C.'s total gross domestic product—or 23 percent of the current U.S. deficit. Since more than half its spending goes to farm subsidies, and more than half its revenue comes from value added taxes, it exists primarily to take money away from consumers and give it to farmers. Structurally, the E.C. is a political mess: in Jacques Delors it has a pope who has adopted the Vatican neologism of "subsidiarity" to mask his centralizing designs. Although the European Court of Justice is an institution worthy of the Holy Roman Empire, the rules defining its jurisdiction are hopelessly obscure. The Common Agricultural Policy recalls the Customs Union built up by Prussia in the mid-nineteenth century. The institution that most closely resembles the federal system of Maastricht is probably the German Reich founded in 1870-71.

The point is that none of these precedents is designed to appeal to the identities of Europeans in the way their present nation-states can. Talk to a Dane about Maastricht, and he will tell you how fed up he is with Germans renting the best properties along the Danish coast and how ecstatic he felt when Denmark beat Germany in the European soccer championships only weeks after the referendum. French Europhobia has much to do with the E.C.'s commitment to reducing border controls at a time when hostility to North African immigrants is growing. The Germans are leery of becoming bankers to the profligate Latins to the South, fearing that a European Central Bank will lack the monetarist rigor of their own Bundesbank. Although most British opposition to Maastricht is based on a pragmatic aversion to bureaucracy, others detect a nasty whiff of a Popish plot whenever Europhiles begin waxing lyrical about the "ancient" (i.e., pre-Reformation) unity of Europe.

The elites, however, seem to understand none of this. All German politicians must repeat after Thomas Mann that they believe in a European Germany, not a German Europe—hence Kohl's declaration last week that Germany "will have failed history if it does not approach European union with the same intensity that it did German unity." Similarly, British pols endlessly proclaim their geographically nonsensical intention to put Britain "at the heart of Europe." No major European party is now anti-European. The new leaders of the British Labour Party—a set of dour, puffy Scots—typify the paralysis of opposition.

Yet somebody has to be anti-European. Take, for example, the economic impact of monetary integration. There is, of course, something to be cheerful about here, since the European Monetary System was set up thirteen years ago. As a result of pegging exchange rates, inflation rates in all the major E.C. economies have converged. (Only Italy, Spain, Greece, and Portugal have yet to reach the Maastricht inflation target of 4.5 percent.) This, along with the success of the Single Market (the European free trade area due to come into effect next year), explains why Europe has for so long been attractive to the business elites—who, of course, finance the political elites.

The price, however, has been high. In response to the immense fiscal and monetary expansion generated by German reunification in 1990-92, the Bundesbank has pushed German interest rates steadily upward to a peak of 10 percent; other EMS members have had to follow. This has meant imposing an inappropriately tight monetary policy on all of Europe, regardless of local conditions. As a result, unemployment is now more than 10 percent in France, Italy, and Britain; rising real interest rates are crippling indebted Britons. In turn, the fiscal position of Germany's "satellites" has deteriorated, with revenues falling and deficits rising, adding (as in Italy and Britain) to the upward pressure on interest rates.

Perversely, the European countries now find them-

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selves under pressure to raise taxes in a recession in order to reach the fiscal targets set out in the Maastricht Treaty. At present only France, Denmark, and Luxembourg are able to do so. The recent upheavals on the European currency markets illustrate the practical difficulties of moving from flexible exchange rates to a single currency. The foreign currency dealers do not believe it can be done at present parities, and they have more cash than the central banks. The result: lira devaluation, with the pound next in line. And no matter how much Kohl leans on the independent Bundesbank, he will not persuade it to cut its rates sufficiently to engender recovery in the other economies. This week's quarter percent cut in German interest rates was a risible token gesture.

One of the more inane clauses of the Maastricht Treaty pledges the E.C. to "contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the member states." The irony is that this is precisely what Maastricht itself has achieved. While the political nomenklatura dream of a bureaucratic superstate in which accountability will inevitably be diluted, their electorates increasingly turn to the nineteenth-century culture of nationalism in search of an antidote. Nationalist (and even some regionalist) parties such as the Flemish Block in Belgium, the Centre Democrats in the Netherlands, the Republicans in Germany, the Lombard Leagues in Italy, and, most successfully, the National Front in France all now turn their fire on the E.C.

It is easy to dismiss such parties as politically neanderthal. But the anti-European backlash has material foundations that are by no means irrational. The biggest drops in enthusiasm for European unification in the past two decades have come from the most prosperous countries—Luxembourg, Germany, France, and Denmark. By comparison, the poorer countries such as Ireland, Spain, Portugal, and Greece are keener than they were in the 1970s—hardly surprising, since between them these countries are net beneficiaries of $8.6 billion in E.C. transfers. Anti-Europeanism reflects anxiety on the part of the prosperous in the northwest that "their" deutsch marks, francs, and pounds will be consigned to a melting pot containing such base currencies as the lira and the escudo.

It may yet be that the French will stand by Maastricht, despite the somewhat febrile atmosphere of *fin de regime* that hangs over Mitterrand's court. It is also possible that the Bundesbank will cut interest rates further, granting some modicum of relief to the pressed finance ministers on the periphery. But neither of these will save Maastricht. The truth is that, not least under the presence of events in Eastern Europe, the dream of a separate Western European federation is fading fast, with little likely to remain except perhaps a kind of rump of small countries neighboring Germany who find shadowing the mark easy. Indeed, at this rate, Maastricht will be in need of an epitaph. *Ex uno plures*, perhaps?

NIALL FERGUSON is a fellow and lecturer in modern history, Peterhouse, Cambridge.

Barbara's bad parenting.

MOMMY DEAREST

By Marjorie Perloff

It is a truth universally acknowledged, the Republican Establishment would have us believe, that a stay-at-home mother has better "family values" than a mother who "chooses" to work. But even if we ignore the nagging little fact that most mothers who work today do so not by choice but from necessity, we are left with a huge definition problem. What does "staying at home" really mean? And what did it mean for the First Lady, now First Mother and First Grandmother of America, Barbara Bush?

The prevailing myth is that Barbara Bush was the kind of mother we all want—mothers who spend their days wiping running noses, attending Little League games, organizing Scout troops, driving car pools, and, of course, baking cookies. In her speech at the Republican convention, Barbara Bush implied that she cheerfully did all these things. When, like so many show dogs, her twenty-two grandchildren were trotted across the stage, even such hardened news analysts as David Brinkley and Peter Jennings expressed wonder. What a terrific family! Just count 'em! And look at that beaming, white-haired granny who spawned this clan! What a role model for all of us in the decadent '90s!

Perhaps it's time to inject a little reality into this Hallmark picture. My daughter Carey was a classmate and close friend of the youngest Bush child, Dorothy ("Dordie," as she was then known), at the National Cathedral School for Girls in Washington. Let me try to recall, especially for younger readers, How It Was in 1968, when Carey and Dordie were fourth-graders. The nostalgia industry has been turning out glowing images of motherhood in these turbulent but still pre-feminist years—pictures of a kinder, gentler America, when mothers stayed at home and loved it, when choice, whether in the case of abortion or of merely going to work, was not yet a major issue, because nice middle-class women stayed home and knew their place.

The reality couldn't have been more different. It is true that fewer middle-class and lower-class women worked, at least not while their children were preschoolers, although of course poor women did work, supplying the domestic help that kept the Barbara Bushes in the business of staying at home. But many of the NCS and St. Alban's mothers, who were affluent enough that they didn't have to work, did have careers. Emily Herzstein's and Nancy Rathbun's moth-

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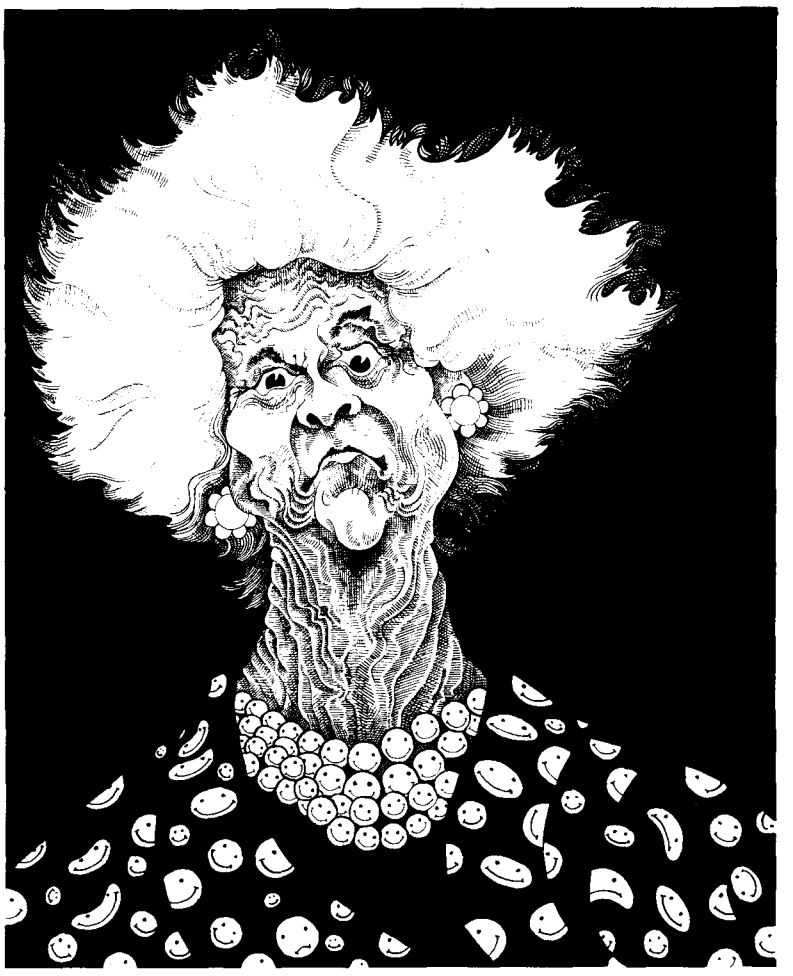
ers were lawyers. Alan Rivlin's mother, Alice, was an economist who later became the chair of the Council of Economic Advisers in the Carter administration. Elizabeth Chew's mother sold real estate, Fran Alexander's mother was a mathematician. Among the other mothers, there were physicians, social workers, journalists, owners of Georgetown boutiques, and, not surprisingly, many teachers. I myself was teaching English at Catholic University, where, incidentally, a good number of my colleagues were mothers.

Most of us worked hard at having flexible schedules: as a professor, I could arrange my classes so as to be home by 4 p.m. or so when Carey and her older sister Nancy came home. Others worked long hours at the office but always managed to come to the Christmas play, the Halloween party, or the football game. Still others decided not to work till their children were older. Many of those later reported a feeling of intense liberation when they finally had a chance to pursue careers outside the home.



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

NCS mothers who didn't work (and seemed to have no intention of ever working) fell into two classes: (1) those who had so many children they could never quite get out from under so as to pursue any job consistently, and (2) those who were very wealthy or socially prominent or were the wives of public figures and hence had heavy social engagements and estates in the Hunt Country or elsewhere to manage. Barbara Bush, of course, fell into both classes. Having given birth six times (she lost one child), and having to attend endless social functions as Mrs. George Bush as well as taking care of the Kennebunkport estate, she was a perfect candidate for "stay-at-home" motherhood.

But does it follow that Barbara Bush was a devoted mother? That she spent lots of time with the children, supervising their games, their meals, their schoolwork? I knew her only slightly, but from what I saw of Dordie, I would say the evidence was less than convincing. Dordie, who was much younger than her four brothers, seemed to be largely on her own, a classic poor little rich girl. She was very sweet and shy, and had difficulty with her schoolwork. Sometimes when she came over to play with Carey, I would help her with her homework, and she often came over to use our World Book Encyclopedia. I recall once asking, "Dordie, don't you have an encyclopedia at your house?" The answer was no. And I must confess that when I drove Dordie home and the maid opened the door, she revealed a house that looked singularly devoid of books. Barbara Bush's fabled literacy project, it seems, didn't begin at home.

Carey and Dordie frequently spent the night at each other's houses, but both girls preferred our house, since most evenings the only person at home at the Bushes' was the maid, as the live-in housekeeper who took care of the children and did most of the household chores was then called. It was the maid (or maids) who cleaned, cooked, did the laundry, and ordered groceries on the phone. Indeed, it is the former Bush maids (and other personnel) who should have been on the stage in Houston, taking their bows as the perpetrators of the Bushes' Family Values. For without them, the household of the Bush superfamily wouldn't have functioned at all.

Not that Barbara Bush wasn't sometimes at home. Whereas most stay-at-home NCS mothers played golf or tennis at the country club, went to countless lunches and charity affairs, played bridge, and shopped, Mrs. Bush, Carey recalls, preferred to shut herself up in her third-floor sewing room, doing needlepoint. At Christmas each of Dordie's friends received a pincushion with her name on it, embroidered by Barbara Bush.

But, as Carey remembers it, Dordie's mother never spent a moment with the girls when they were playing at her house, never inquired about homework, and Carey never sat down to a family dinner. George Bush was then director of the CIA, and the Bushes were out almost every night—at cocktail parties, dinners, receptions, charity balls, political events. Dinner, under these cir-

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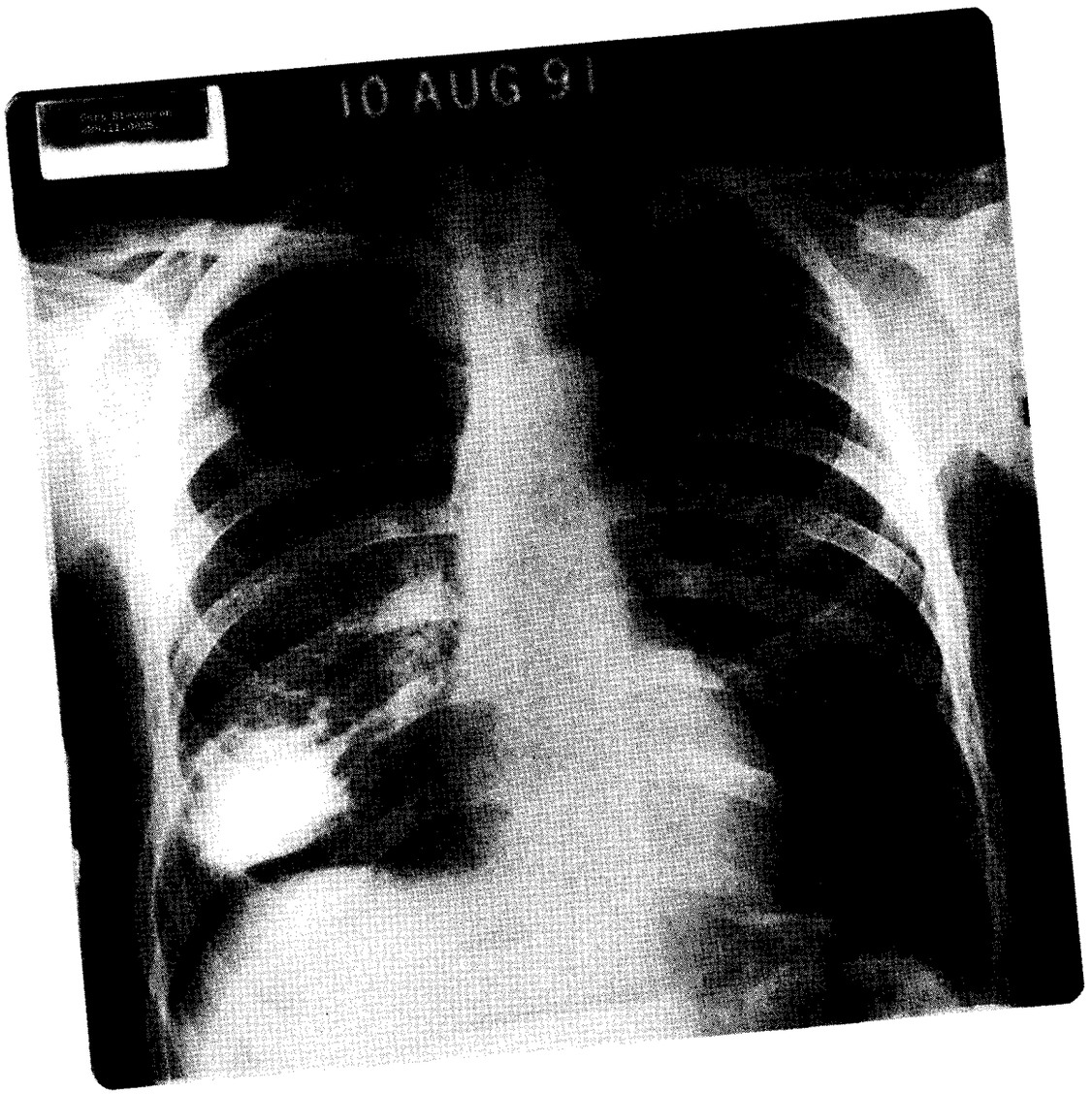

Because he works for a small company, the prognosis isn't good for his fellow workers either.

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cumstances, was prepared by the maid and served to the girls in the family room. Barbara was often out of town for a number of days, accompanying George on his professional trips. As for George, he was pretty much the Invisible Man in Dordie's life. I do recall that once Carey was invited on a Sunday afternoon to go sailing on the Chesapeake with Dordie's father. On that particular Sunday, as Carey reported when she got home, Barbara Bush, evidently not a keen sailor, stayed home.

Barbara Bush's family values thus had little in common with those of the average stay-at-home mother of the '60s, who worked a fourteen-hour day fixing meals, doing the laundry, cleaning out the oven, trying to entertain the toddler while the baby finally took a nap, and so on. At the Bush house in Spring Valley, these chores were performed by the help, the one exception being the driving of the car pool. Just as the great ladies of the eighteenth century had their "at home" days, so the mothers of the '60s had their car pool days, when they presented themselves at the school entrance on Woodley Road in their station wagons, ready to drive home five misbehaving children (though the carpool hour was the one hour when Johnny, anxious to impress his little peers, could ignore Mother completely).

What, then, makes Barbara Bush such a powerful role model? Young people today, exhausted by their daily round of working and child rearing, look with envy at those photographs of Barbara, surrounded by her brood of children and dogs, a picture of placid contentment. But behind that image there is the reality of a rich woman whom many of us recall as seeming to enjoy her dogs more than her children, a woman who rarely smiled. Indeed, I flinch when Barbara Bushmania takes over the T.V. screen, as it has so often over the past few years.

I ask myself: Is the quality of motherhood really to be measured by the number of children one gives birth to? More important, what have those fabled "family values" done for the Bush children? Dordie and the boys did not distinguish themselves at school or at college. None of the four Bush sons pursued a career in public service, in the professions, or the arts. Rather, they have chosen the straight and narrow path of making money. Neil Bush, as everyone knows, was heavily involved in the Denver-based Silverado S&L scandal, and very nearly went to jail. George Jr., a Texas oilman like his father, has specialized in get-rich-quick schemes like the selling of tax shelters of questionable legality. Jeb Bush, a Miami real estate operator and the most politically active of the brothers, was investigated in 1984 by a House Government Operations subcommittee for the part he played in the affairs of International Medical Centers. (See "The Brothers Bush" by Mark Hosenball, TNR, April 3, 1989.) Marvin Bush is part-owner of a Blockbuster Video franchise in Georgetown. As for Dordie, until she remarried just a few months ago, she was a divorced 32-year-old mother of two, who was not working outside the home but evidently living quite comfortably—proof of how nicely family dollars complement family values.

Both George and Barbara come from moneyed, suburban New York families. If the fortunes of their offspring seem less auspicious than their own, it is hardly surprising. For the values Barbara Bush really represents are those of a smug know-nothingness. In a convention interview with Judy Woodruff, Barbara Bush, newly self-confident in her role as discussant of political and foreign affairs (now that she has been declared the most beloved Republican of them all), confused NATO with the European Community, and then, realizing her error, pooh-poohed it, remarking that it's so hard to get the names of those "foreign" institutions straight.

Here is the woman whose popularity has been soaring throughout the campaign, unlike that of her rival, Hillary Clinton, who was found by 35 percent of those polled recently by *Time* to be "too pushy." The contrast between the two is, of course, generational, but as the counterexample of Marilyn Quayle testifies, it is much more than that. A sizable portion of the electorate continues to perceive accomplishment in women as threatening. And of course the Bush administration is doing its best to capitalize on that fear.

The stay-at-home/go-to-work debate is in need of urgent reformulation. The question is not whether Hillary Clinton would be a "better" mother if she "stayed at home" like Barbara Bush. The question, and perhaps we should put it to our children, is this: Whom (I still use the accusative case, especially when talking to children, where it's important to set standards, even if George's new campaign slogan is "Who do you trust?") would you rather stay at home with: Barbara Bush, which is to say, with her surrogate, a woman who is being paid to watch you watching T.V., or Hillary Clinton, who, once she has come home from a long day at the office, talks to you and teaches you things about the world?

MARJORIE PERLOFF is the author of *Radical Artifice: Writing Poetry in the Age of Media* (University of Chicago Press).

Women and the Democrats.

OUR PARTY

By Betty Friedan

Is it real, the year of the woman in American politics? Is it a sound bite, a cosmetic illusion? Or is it a shift in American politics and in the women's movement? Ever since we started the movement, I've been going to the political conventions. In the late '60s and early '70s, as the first president of the fledgling

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The President's New Math

By Albert Shanker, President of the American Federation of Teachers

A number of political analysts have suggested that the Democrats used to win elections because they went around promising people all kinds of goodies. At the same time, the Republicans would throw cold water on the Democrats' proposals by saying that they'd cost too much. Recently, the Republicans have learned that they too can promise goodies, so voters are hearing lots of promises from Republicans as we get closer to November 3. But the Republicans avoid the question of financing the programs altogether. "Don't worry," they say. "We'll figure out how to pay for all this in the next budget cycle"—in other words, after the election. "Trust us on this. And, by the way, we're going to decrease the deficit, too."

When he spoke at the Republican convention, the President promised an across-the-board tax cut, but he still has not given Americans a credible explanation of how he would pay for it. He has promised a $10 billion job-training program to retrain displaced workers and disadvantaged young people. This is a good idea in itself, but the President refuses to explain how he will fund this program—until after the election. In fact, President Bush is running around the country making all kinds of costly promises and refusing to explain how he can possibly pay for them.

The mathematics of the President's voucher program are convenient, and the argument itself has become twisted.

An outstanding example of this strategy is the so-called GI bill for kids, a school voucher program that the President and Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander have been pushing very hard. This program would give $1000 apiece to 500,000 children from low- and middle-income families in 50 communities to help them pay for a private school education. In other words, the bill now before Congress would cost taxpayers $500 million, which in terms of federal programs is fairly modest. But the GI bill for kids is an iceberg proposal of which we are seeing only the tip. The real costs are hidden and they are huge.

Let's forget for a minute about the public school students who might want to take advantage of the President's voucher program to transfer to private schools and look only at the students who are already attending private schools. There are about 5 million of them. The President's program would provide only 500,000 vouchers—enough for one private school child in ten. What's going to happen if parents in Philadelphia learn that their city has not been chosen for the voucher program but Detroit or Albuquerque has? All over the country, low- or middle-income parents who are paying to send a child to private school take the President's proposal as a promise that they are going to get help in paying the tuition. The President is encouraging them in this view—they represent a lot of votes.

Giving vouchers to low- and middle-income families is also a kind of promise to the rest of the 5 million private school children and their parents that their turn is coming too. If it's fair to help pay the tuition for some kids going to private school, it's fair for all of them. So the voucher bill is also an appeal for their votes.

If George Bush tried to limit vouchers to the original 500,000 kids, the parents of all the other children who worked and voted for him would feel an enormous sense of betrayal, just the way many taxpayers did when they found out the truth behind "Read my lips. No new taxes." And there would be enormous pressure for a $5 billion program instead of the $500 million program we're hearing about now.

But the costs would probably escalate far beyond $5 billion. A $1000 voucher is not much money. The argument of private school parents who support vouchers has always been that they are being doubly taxed: First they pay taxes for kids in public schools and then they tax themselves to send their own kids to private schools. They believe that it's only fair for the government to spend the *same* amount of money on their child's private education that it spends on another child's public school education. In other words, approximately $5,300 per pupil. Once the principle of using public money to pay for kids to attend private school was established, it would be hard to resist this argument.

What would this cost American taxpayers? Over $26,000,000,000—that's $26 billion—a year, twice the $13 billion the federal government spent on K-12 education in 1991. And this is without counting the cost of giving vouchers to children now in public school who wanted to transfer to private school. If only 3 percent of these children moved to private school, the federal cost of the program would rise another $4 billion a year.

Has President Bush thought about how much his voucher program will cost? And has he thought about how it could become an entitlement that would undoubtedly grow year by year, the way medical costs have? Probably not, because what is mainly in his mind is winning a second term in November.

Not only are the mathematics of the President's proposal convenient; the argument itself has become twisted. Mr. Bush denounces those who want to use public money to support public schools as catering to "special interest groups." But he describes his own program, which involves giving public money to private schools, as being in the public interest. That's new math and Newspeak.

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National Organization for Women, I took reporting assignments just to get through the doors. I was one of the few women there, and virtually the only person talking about such things as the Equal Rights Amendment or the right to choose. The women at both the Republican and Democratic conventions were mainly wives of delegates, a few lowly county clerks, and members of ladies' auxiliaries who addressed envelopes and served coffee at local party functions. Mostly the women attended fashion shows.

Just twenty years ago, organizing the National Women's Political Caucus ("To Make Policy, Not Coffee") was an ambitious, daring dream. In 1972, the year Shirley Chisholm briefly ran for president, it was considered an act of courage for women like Liz Carpenter, who had behind-the-scenes clout as Lady Bird Johnson's top aide in the Johnson White House, to support the feminist cause. What few caucuses we assembled were assigned remote parlors in the convention hotels; it took enormous effort to get high party officials even to meet with us. When the Democratic Party reluctantly passed a rule requiring that women make up half of the convention's delegates at the 1976 convention, party officials tapped their wives and secretaries to fill the positions. It became clear that many of even those supposedly "safe" wives or clerks, talking with me in corners, were secret supporters of the women's movement. But it was a subversive support.

How different the Democratic convention was this year. This time we did not have to fight for more priority to be accorded women's rights, abortion, child care, parental leave—all the "women's issues" that party leaders had shunned before. Instead, Clinton staffers, women and men, came to us asking for advice on how best to word the speeches. Indeed, from the first night at Madison Square Garden it was clear that "women's issues" are now primary political issues. The women's caucus was held in the Grand Ballroom, and at the first of the daily meetings, nearly 1,000 campaign and party officials and respected women leaders came. It was the only caucus that Bill and Hillary Clinton attended before his nomination.

On the convention floor, there seemed to be almost as many men as women wearing "Pro-Change Is Pro-Choice" armbands. "Keep Abortion Legal Now" signs sprouted from delegations all over the floor. Senator Barbara Mikulski invoked a "new heart, a new spirit, a new way of doing business," as she introduced the women running for Senate this year—Carol Mosely Braun, Lynn Yeakel, Dianne Feinstein, Barbara Boxer, and others. "We speak in a different voice," she intoned.

Tuesday, the second day of the convention, was virtually given over to women. Pat Schroeder of Colorado introduced more women running for Congress than all who were ever elected. "We don't just need a new generation of leadership, we need a new gender of leadership," Clinton told the women's caucus. "Building up women does not diminish men."

Even the political ads the Democrats showed us featured our concerns. Mandy Grunwald, the Democratic counterpart to Republican p.r. guru Roger Ailes, produces spots that rely heavily on her experience as a woman. "We're the ones who bring to the table a real sense of everyday life," she told the women's caucus. "People sense women know what's really happening, day by day."

And yet even twelve years ago I could not have foreseen the changes this political year has brought. Ronald Reagan's election ushered in a decade of setbacks for women. The Equal Rights Amendment was defeated. Pro-choice congressional candidates were targeted for defeat. And, as the culture of greed took over in the '80s and "liberalism" and "feminism" became dirty words, even the Democrats began to soft-pedal their support for women's rights. In 1988 women in my think tank for the evolution of feminist thought at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles wanted to put out a series of T.V. spots warning women of the Supreme Court dangers of Bush's anti-choice position on abortion. Though Cher had agreed to narrate and we'd been promised studio space, the Dukakis campaign refused to let us do it. Back in New York, Ronnie Eldridge, Bella Abzug, Sarah Kovner, and others wanted to make a similar appeal to women on Eleanor Roosevelt's birthday; the Democratic campaign bosses first decreed that we must not even use the word "choice," and then refused to let us make an appeal to women altogether. We lost heart, and were not surprised that by November 1988 Dukakis had lost the gender gap that the Democrats enjoyed at the beginning of that campaign. By 1992 NOW and radical feminists, disgusted with both parties, were simply absenting themselves from presidential politics and calling for a third party.

Even feminist leaders did not realize the extent to which the movement we started had become the mainstream of society: all of those daughters graduating from law school and MBA programs, fighting the glass ceiling in the corporations, starting their own businesses, organizing nurses, coming to leadership in African American and Jewish, Protestant, and Catholic organizations, were registering to vote in record numbers: 10 million more women than men. Catalyzed by Anita Hill, in raising the money and having the nerve to challenge and defeat seemingly invincible senators—Braun's primary victory over Allen Dixon in Illinois, Yeakel's challenge to Arlen Specter in Pennsylvania, Boxer's and Feinstein's primary victories for Senate in California—we made visible our own power, not as a special interest group, but as a true moral majority in society.

Feminists can't relax their guard. Clinton's top brain trust on economics and foreign policy is a men's-only club. As we become truly part of the political process, we must help to restructure it and revitalize it. The eighteen women now running for Senate, sixteen of them Democrats, and the ninety-five Democrat and fifty-nine Republican women running for the House are bound

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to make that difference. Women are more likely than men not just to give priority to women's rights but to push for health care legislation, child care, parental leave, and for laws protecting the environment, education, housing, and the elderly.

The media didn't get the "woman thing" at the Democratic convention. Throughout the convention, reporters complained it was a dull affair, insisted there was no breaking story. But for the 51 percent of the delegates who were women—and for many of the men, too—there was a thrill of excitement, watching those women who are running for the Senate and the House called onto the stage by Ann Richards. But, of course, by the time the women came on, the networks had turned off. Prime time had been used up by the last gasps of Paul Tsongas, Jesse Jackson, and Jerry Brown.

The media's cynicism reflects the political blind spot about women up till now. In a Freedom Forum lunch session on "Privacy and Politics: Has the Press Gone Too Far?" eminent newspaper and broadcast executives, in effect, defended their obsession with candidates' sexual "character." Only the women present—Schroeder and Representative Louise Slaughter, Barbara Reynolds of *USA Today*, and some of the rest of us—insisted they were behind the times, focusing on women mainly as sex objects whereas in 1992 the real political story is women as the main actors of change. It was pointed out that as long as the political press corps was largely male, the sexual behavior of Roosevelt, Eisenhower, Kennedy, while known, was not reported. But for women, "character" in 1992 is not sex, but the cynical manipulation of people's frustrations over the crisis in our cities and the crumbling of the economy into more hatred, sexual backlash, polarization, and violence.

During the convention, reporters repeatedly asked to interview me about the feminist response to the campaign's "softening" of Hillary Clinton's image. They didn't understand that the woman story at the Democratic convention was no longer the First Lady (though it's interesting how that image is evolving). The story is that women are no longer on the political sidelines, but taking center stage as senators and governors and campaign managers, defining the issue themselves. As Schroeder put it: "It's clearly the new, active voice of women that accounts for the fact that there's a lot more soul to this convention."

In the year of the woman, women can also be seen fighting for their own power as much as any power-hungry men. We must not let feminism be co-opted as a mask for cynical corruption by women or by men. We must resist that polarization of "us" against "them" (women against other women, even women against men) with our own new vision of community that puts first the real needs of people in life: real jobs and real health insurance for all of our real American families.

BETTY FRIEDAN is the author of *Second Stage* (Dell).

A feminist delusion.

THE BACKLASH MYTH

By Germaine Greer

As my car swept around the bend and into the dip, there was a semi-trailer coming up out of it on the wrong side of the road, overtaking at a blind bend on a narrow country road. I stood on my brakes, which, being equipped with the latest in German ABS systems, did their stuff. Instead of sliding under the truck, I stopped dead. I also flashed my headlights in protest. As the semi-trailer pulled past me with six inches to spare, he jabbed two fingers furiously up at me. Let's be quite clear about what the two-finger salute means; it means a digit up your vagina, a digit up your rectum. Fuck you *and* bugger you. I shrugged it off, of course. Such insults are commonplace, after all, but their real meaning should be registered.

Was this backlash, d'you reckon? As I see it, backlash is what you get when, having pushed one way and then released the pressure, the thing you were pushing, rather than simply resuming its previous position, springs back much further and bangs you in the face. The idea of backlash implies the initial use of excessive force by the person who eventually cops the grief. It means forcing someone or something to take an untenable position, thus provoking a predictable overreaction. What happened on that blind bend was that the truck driver was already abusing his superior weight and mass and threatening my life by doing so. What provoked his sadistic reaction is that I presumed to tell him so. To argue that I provoked the insult by unnecessarily flashing my lights is to fall for the bullshit notion of backlash. The truck driver was, is, and ever shall be, as long as he has a few tons of hardware under him, a bully. He will always abuse people if he can get away with it. It is a feature of this type of personality that it generally justifies its brutal reactions by asserting provocation.

Women's anger is regularly provoked by pornography, by grotesque injustice in the workplace, in the courts, by comedians, by female impersonators, by sexual harassment, by casual insult, but no one expects them to lash back. If I had turned my car around and followed the truck driver to his next stop, walked up to him, and kneed him in the groin for (a) nearly killing me and (b) insulting me, my reaction would have been regarded as virtually pathological, because I am female. Females are not expected to exact revenge for being terrorized and insulted, or indeed for any other outrage. Men, on the other hand, are expected and allowed to

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revenge themselves in disproportionate fashion.

Every day in the courts men get off murder charges because the victim "nagged" them; in one such case in England, a man who drowned his common law wife by holding her head in a plastic garbage can full of home-made beer was set free by the judge, who was deeply moved by his tale of the wounding things she had said to him. As he left the court, the murderer said, "Don't get me wrong; she was a lovely person"—or words to that effect. Nobody seemed to think that it would have been preferable to have gone to the pub to escape her railing than to have killed her. He was provoked, you see.

Men find feminism provoking. They have always found it so, and they have always reacted. The idea of a particular "male backlash" occurring at this time has no substance, first because it relies upon a spurious triumphalistic account of what women have achieved so far. The idea seems to be that, as women have invaded the male preserve, they have threatened male superiority and finally begun to oppress men. All the while male resentment has been growing to burst forth in an orgy of repressive legislation, rape, and murder. This argument has no more truth in it than the argument that a woman who unpacks her aching heart with bitter words brings upon herself death by drowning.

Male hostility to women is a constant; all men hate all women some of the time; some men hate all women all of the time; some men hate some women all of the time. Unfortunately, women cannot bring themselves to hate men, possibly because they carry them in their wombs from time to time. (It may be this very fact, of course, which brings men to hate women.) Hatred is born of guilt and fear. (The truck driver resorted to threatening insult because he knew himself to be in the wrong.) Women are not allowed even to recognize the fact that men hate them; no other chapter of *The Female Eunuch* caused a tenth of the outcry that went up about the short chapter called "Hate."

The question whether there is a male backlash occurring now resolves itself into two questions: "Are men persecuting women more now than they did formerly?" and "Is this increased persecution the result of a reaction to increasing erosion by women of male privilege?" The answer to the first question is problematic; an increase of 82 percent in reported incidents of rape, to take a puzzling British example, is more likely to reflect a heightening of female consciousness of outrage and an increased willingness to denounce it than to represent a worsening of male conduct. British attempts to encourage women to report rape appear to be working, working rather too well, some police officers might think. On the other hand, if a demented man bursts into a schoolroom and shoots up girl students, the murder statistics do bend in the direction of increased violence against women. Such massacres should probably be assessed in the context of increased violence against all kinds of people; the most horrific sex murders of the last ten years have been male on male.

The answer to the second question, "Is this increased persecution the result of a reaction to increasing erosion by women of male privilege?" is certainly, "No."

Let us consider the question of revoking what is known to some as the right to abortion and to feminists as the right to choice in the matter of whether to bear a child. Feminists sometimes call this right "the right to control one's own body." Some think that women have won this right and that the male backlash means that they are at the point of losing it. An actress appearing at a "pro-choice" rally in America called stirringly upon the U.S. government to "stay out of our wombs," not realizing that the womb is not a private place and possibly never has been.

The fiction of the right to "choice" masked women's real vulnerability in the matter of reproduction. It is typical of the contradictions that break women's hearts that when they availed themselves of their fragile right to abortion they often, even usually, went with grief and humiliation to carry out a painful duty that was presented to them as a privilege. Abortion is the last in a long line of non-choices that could begin at the very beginning with the time and the place and the manner of love-making. How does a woman come to be having unprotected sex of the kind that could expose her both to HIV infection and pregnancy? Perhaps, but only perhaps, because she wanted to.

Female sexuality still depends upon male demand, and male demand is more genital-centered and more specific than women's urge to express sensuality and tenderness. Women's desire for affection and closeness usually has to be translated, mostly unconsciously, into desire for sex. The kind of sex that leaves women pregnant is not the kind that gives them the most intense pleasure, but it is the kind that they usually get. Women are so used to not being in control of how they have sex that they hardly realize that the pre-empting of their choice whether or not to be pregnant begins then and there.

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In order that vaginas can be always and everywhere accessible to the male, women are expected to insert devices into the uteri or to take steroids on a daily basis. This is interpreted as having the power to choose their reproductive destiny when it is no such thing. IUDs provoke infection and heavy bleeding; pills alter the whole metabolism. To accept contraception is to choose between two unacceptable alternatives, forced pregnancy or temporary infertility with a greater or lesser degree of present discomfort or malaise and unknown and unguessable long-term consequences.

When a pregnancy is confirmed, the choice to end it can only be a genuine choice if the pregnant woman has other alternatives. If she will lose her lodgings and her job or her educational opportunities if she has a baby, then she has no choice at all. If her boyfriend threatens to leave her if she does not accept termination; if her parents threaten to make her a ward of court or to disown her or to commit suicide or whatever; if she is told she has to give her baby up for adoption, her right to choose is being ignored. If she is under age she has no rights at all. As long as virtually all single parent families live on or below the poverty line, the decision to terminate a pregnancy cannot be free.

The emergence of abortion as a central issue in this election is not the result of male backlash. George Bush did not flip-flop on the issue because he was possessed by a desire to encroach on Barbara Bush's preserve or to win back territory from Gloria Steinem (who has none), but because his political analysts told him that more people would vote for him if he changed his tack on abortion.

"You've come a long way, baby" is after all a slogan used to sell cigarettes to a particular female market. We have not come a long way; what is remarkable, given the implacability of male hostility to uppity women, is that we have survived. Where once we struggled for the right to work, we now have a duty to work, to service the family debt. Our share of the pay-packet is actually smaller than it was twenty years ago, which is one reason why married women with children are in work when we have high male unemployment.

The men rant and rave that women have stolen their jobs; the truth is that, because they were too mean and too dumb to give women equal pay, the employers now use women because they are cheaper. Women don't actually enjoy doing dead-end jobs that are mostly menial drudgery for pin-money wages; they do them because a single wage is no longer enough to live on and keep up the payments on the house, the car, and the furniture. It was trade unionists themselves who institutionalized the differences in the valuation of jobs done by men and jobs by women, on the eve of a radical restructuring of the job market, and left themselves outside the factory gates. Unemployed men bash women and children, but their brutality should not be excused as "backlash." Like the truck driver in my example, they had the power and they brought the situation upon themselves.

The myth of backlash, then, represents another attempt by men to pass the buck for their own failures and to justify their own tyrannical behavior. As long as women pretend to believe it, they will be simply humoring the troublesome male, in order to get on with the tasks of every day, which are heavier and more demanding than they ever were.

GERMAINE GREER's new book, *The Change*, will be published by Knopf in November.

Bush and the patriarchy.

FATHER FIGURES

By Naomi Wolf

The two truly enduring images from the summer campaign are the families of Bill Clinton and George Bush. By contrasting the "family values" of the Bush tribe against those of the Clinton clan, the Republicans have been deliberately seeking to frame the campaign as a referendum on patriarchy, pitting the equal-partnership family against the male-ownership model. And they ask us to choose the latter.

The Republicans know exactly what they are doing. While feminists have discussed a war against women, the Republicans use phrases such as "marriage and slavery" and "children suing their parents" to court that large constituency in whose eyes the conflict represents a war against men. The Republicans haven't invented the fears. For the Reagan-Bush years saw a domestic revolution: the End of Patriarchy, the uprising against the absolute role of fathers. Survivors of child abuse, marital rape, and domestic violence breached the wall of silence around the private home, man's castle.

Although welfare mothers and lesbian couples are targets because they lack fathers altogether, the Republicans' concern is not so much the presence of a father as the nature of the father's relationship to the wife and children. The patriarchal-authoritarian family, in which the father has legally and socially upheld prerogatives over the bodies and actions of his wife and children, is championed over what Gloria Steinem has called "the family as a democracy," which the Clintons represent. Thus Bush offers a devastatingly coherent "domestic policy," in the purest sense of the word.

Once we get this, the race's otherwise hard-to-read gender metaphors grow clearer, as does the prominent role that children play. Clinton's autobiography is a myth of origin for the rise of the democratic family. He is the feminist giant-killer, the ethical Oedipus, whose narrative centers on the firm yet gentle overthrow of the tyrannical father. Clinton's alcoholic stepfather regularly assaulted his mother; at last young Bill Clinton

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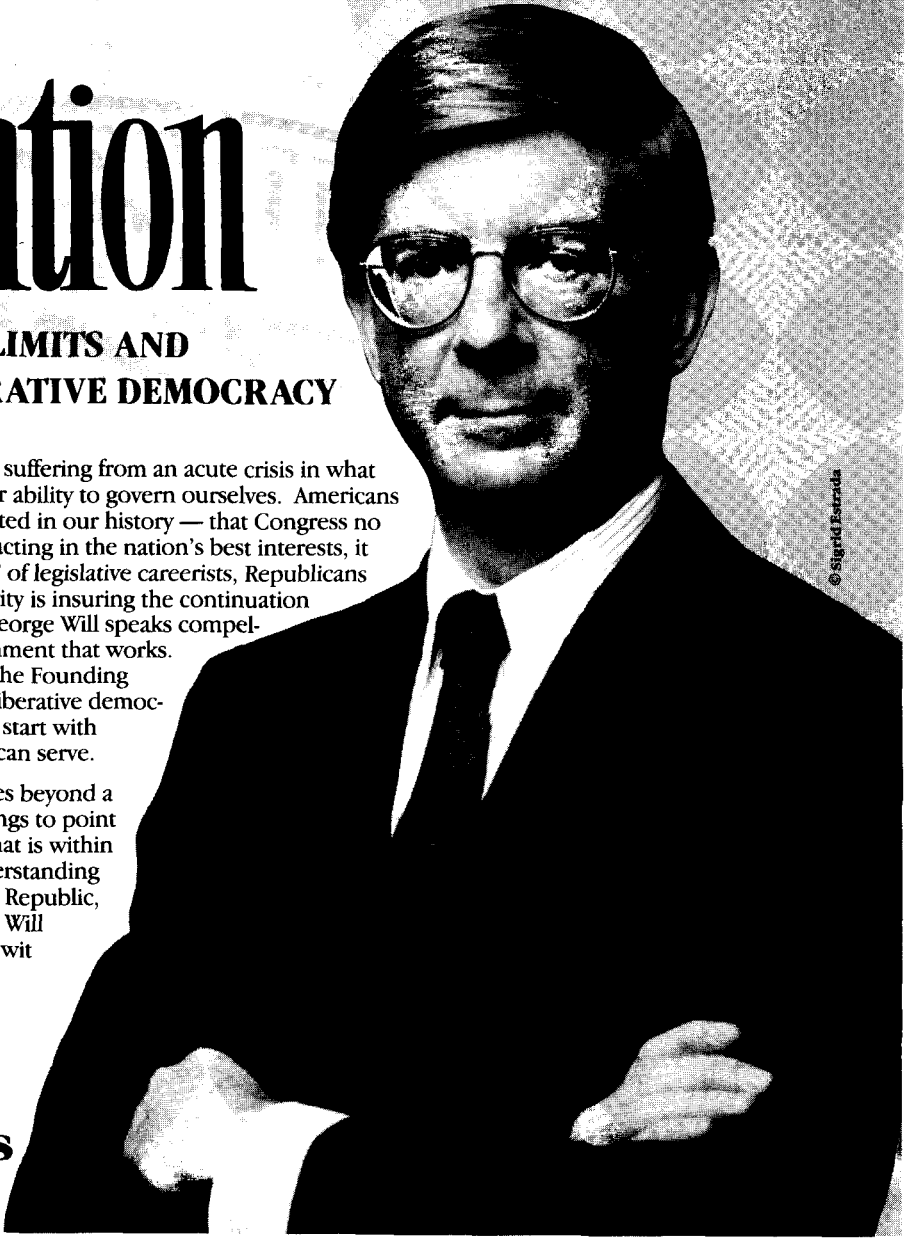
Restoration

CONGRESS, TERM LIMITS AND THE RECOVERY OF DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY



As a nation, George Will says, we are now suffering from an acute crisis in what was once our greatest pride and asset, our ability to govern ourselves. Americans are convinced — to a degree unprecedented in our history — that Congress no longer works. Unwilling or incapable of acting in the nation's best interests, it has become a vast "incumbency machine" of legislative careerists, Republicans and Democrats alike, whose primary activity is insuring the continuation of their own careers. In RESTORATION George Will speaks compellingly to our national longing for a government that works. What is needed, he argues, is a return to the Founding Fathers' dream of true representative, deliberative democracy — a fundamental reform that should start with limits on the number of terms legislators can serve.

Beginning where others leave off, Will goes beyond a coruscating indictment of Congress's failings to point the way to a much more hopeful future that is within our reach. Drawing on his profound understanding of how government works, his love of the Republic, and his respect for what Congress can be, Will writes with the incisiveness, wisdom, and wit that have earned him a large and loyal audience.

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rose up against him, first offering to help the drunken man to stand, and then warning him never to abuse his wife again.

The adult Clinton vowed in his nomination speech to compel fathers to live up to their responsibilities to families that they no longer "head"; and Al Gore's tale of how his wounded son taught him the meaning of life upended the patriarchal arrangement in which fathers teach sons.

These fables contain political promises as well, allying Clinton with those policies that rein in abusive father-right and promote a kind of therapeutic family democracy both at home and nationwide. This family model leads the Clintons to believe—naively—that they can resolve the adultery issue simply by talking about it and asking Chelsea for her opinion.

In contrast, the actions of the Bush-Quayle wives and children place them squarely in Camp Patriarchy. The Quayles offer up the body of their 13-year-old daughter to the pro-life principle, declaring her opinion to be moot. George P., one of "the little brown ones," pledges his loyalty to his grandfather, and is blessed by an actual, white-bearded, Greek-Orthodox *patriarch.* Finally, Barbara Bush claims that her granddaughter, when told of rumors of her grandfather's infidelity, laughed, "That's so funny." With this anecdote, the Bush tribe—and administration—ally themselves with the covenant in which women and children keep men's secrets, protecting father-right through their denial.

When the Republicans cite "family values," do they refer simply to fidelity, responsibility, and prayerfulness? After all, many in Clinton's constituency uphold these ideals. Or could it be that when they pledge to uphold "the Judeo-Christian tradition," they mean not merely a religious tradition but a patriarchal one? They are not placing Jews and Christians over other religions, but men over women. Judeo-Christian scripture gives men ownership rights of their families. Hillary Clinton took heat for comparing marriage to slavery. But the rabbis of the Talmud beat her to it, placing "women, slaves, and minors," along with "cattle," under categories of property: "By three means is a woman acquired, money, writ and intercourse" (Kedushin 1:1). Ephesians 5:22-24 urges, "Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the Church."

A married couple used to be, as legal theorist Catharine MacKinnon paraphrases Blackstone, "one in the eyes of the law—him." But with the advent of "equitable distribution," wives gained the right to half the marital property upon divorce, to accompany stricter sanctions against marital assault and rape. The sin of the activists who were assailed along with Hillary Clinton is not that they pointed out the similarity between marriage and slavery, but that they began to do something about it.

Feminist crusades went mainstream and crossed fatefully into popular culture, becoming a staple of *People* magazine covers, daytime talk shows, and T.V. movies of the week. These "weird" media, which the establishment has only now recognized as Americans' main source of political information, are also their main source of information about sexual politics. For years they have offered American women and children an exposé of all that's wrong behind the picket fence and a steady stream of alternatives to the patriarchal-authoritarian home. One revolt instigated another, from the movie *The Burning Bed* to Roseanne Arnold's and Oprah Winfrey's revelations of child sexual abuse, to the wave of legislation seeking clemency for battered wives who killed abusive husbands. The Waterloo in the war against men came when several courts extended the statute of limitations allowing adult sexual abuse survivors to testify against their abusers. In other words, children were empowered to sue their parents.

If this war assailed only that minority of men who are abusive, the Republican bid would fail for lack of numbers; but all men are watching basic notions of masculine value come under attack, as male icons are ousted from the center of the military, the literary canon, and the pulpit.

George Bush is promising change, and voters are casting about for whatever on earth it might be to which he is referring. Look no further. The breach of masculinity took place on the Reagan-Bush watch. Bush is announcing that he won't make that mistake again.

Will the Republican strategy work? Though polls show that "family values" rank very low on the voters' list of concerns, we are unusually vulnerable if the Republicans continue to sharpen their pro-patriarchal symbolism. We are poised between a familiar, oppressive past and an egalitarian future that is both alluring and frighteningly unknown. Each of our families, continually rebalancing, combines elements of both systems. Republicans are trying to polarize this dilemma of the heart along the lines of party affiliation. As one side moves toward the painful, healing revolution to make the postpatriarchal family equitable and safe, the other, courted by likely Republican attacks on the women's

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movement (dyke-baiting of feminist leaders, and the disinformation that feminists are anti-family), will retreat into secure, if repressive, patriarchal values.

The Democrats must neither run from this situation nor trivialize it. The usual male political strategists' tactic—of letting "women's issues" take care of themselves—will be suicidal this year. They must stand by feminism, and that is a damned difficult choice to make. They must show the electorate that feminism is pro-family and pro-parents, and make the extremely un-scary, child-positive agenda of women's organizations—from prenatal care to maternity leave—available to all.

The bottom line is that the great majority of men hope, along with women, for partnerships based on love and not on fear, and relationships with their children that provide the fathering they themselves so often bitterly lacked as children. Americans, though scarred and frightened, do not want to go backward if they are given a real choice. The Democrats must fill in that indistinct, egalitarian vision, and show us the policies that will get us safely there. They must not only suggest that the postpatriarchal family is more fun and more loving than the old-fashioned version; they must reveal that it is more moral.

NAOMI WOLF is the author of *The Beauty Myth* (Anchor).

The new feminist jurisprudence.

BATTERED REASON

By Jean Bethke Elshtain

Feminism in the West has always been of at least two minds about the nature of male and female identity. Egalitarian feminists hold that there is a single, generic human being. People may, of course, differ in temperament, abilities, and power, but such differences must be assessed by a universal standard. What is excellent in a man, they argue, is excellent in a woman and vice versa. A nefarious deed is nefarious no matter who commits it. The problem for women historically is that men were the paradigmatic exemplars of humanity. Most feminists insisted that women too shared in the excellences wrongly deemed "masculine"; hence women could not fairly be denied access to education, property, the vote, and other civic rights.

This egalitarian or "assimilationist" feminism was always challenged by an argument from women who subscribed to a feminism of "difference." Why accept a single human standard—and a male one at that? Is it not only possible but even desirable that there are many human virtues, and that women may more likely serve as exemplars of some just as men stand for others? Perhaps valor is, in some sense, masculine even as compassion is, in some sense, feminine. The problem for women is that the qualities most linked to women have been devalued overall, that male virtues were rewarded (with medals and high office and official institutional power) while female virtues (succor, temperance, durability) were ranked low in the overall scheme of things. As one feminist puts it: "Men have had more pomp in their circumstances."

The most disquieting developments at the moment come from the "difference" end of the continuum. For, taken to an extreme, difference begins to blot out equality and to lay claim to privilege, or at least to open season on all the cumbersome rules and regulations aimed at achieving fair play. Fairness itself comes to seem a paltry thing in contrast to empowerment, as can be seen increasingly in academic feminist discourse. At one conference I attended, several women vehemently insisted that it would be best to jettison the notion of "equality" altogether. We want "nothing of equality," one participant exclaimed. We want nothing of this "male standard." What she aimed to put in the place of political fights about equality was a "celebration of the female will to power." This seemed a tad murky at best and not a little disquieting, considering how the will to power has worked itself out, politically, in the past. But the specter that is haunting feminism, the specter of difference constructed as a principle designed to trump all other principles, pops up everywhere these days.

One area where the argument from difference has made major inroads is feminist jurisprudence. One finds many, often quite interesting, discussions about whether the "female voice" might not differ—as defendant, witness, and victim—from the male voice and the like. But the debate has escaped the hothouse of the law classroom and academic journals and made its way into the courtroom, often in bizarre and troubling forms that reflect one side of the "will to power" coin. As Nietzsche himself observed, the flip side of an urge to dominate is an urge to submit and then to construe victimization as a claim to privilege.

In the social world of the radical feminist, women are routinely portrayed as debased, victimized, deformed, and mutilated. By construing herself as a victim, the woman, in this scheme of things, seeks to attain power through depictions of her victimization. The presumption is that the victim speaks in a voice more reliable than that of any other. (And in this world, remember, there are only two kinds of people—victims and oppressors.) The voice of the victim gains not only privilege but hegemony—provided she remains a victim, incapable, helpless, demeaned. This can be part and parcel of an explicit power play. Or it may serve as one feature of a strategy of exculpation—evasion of responsibility for a

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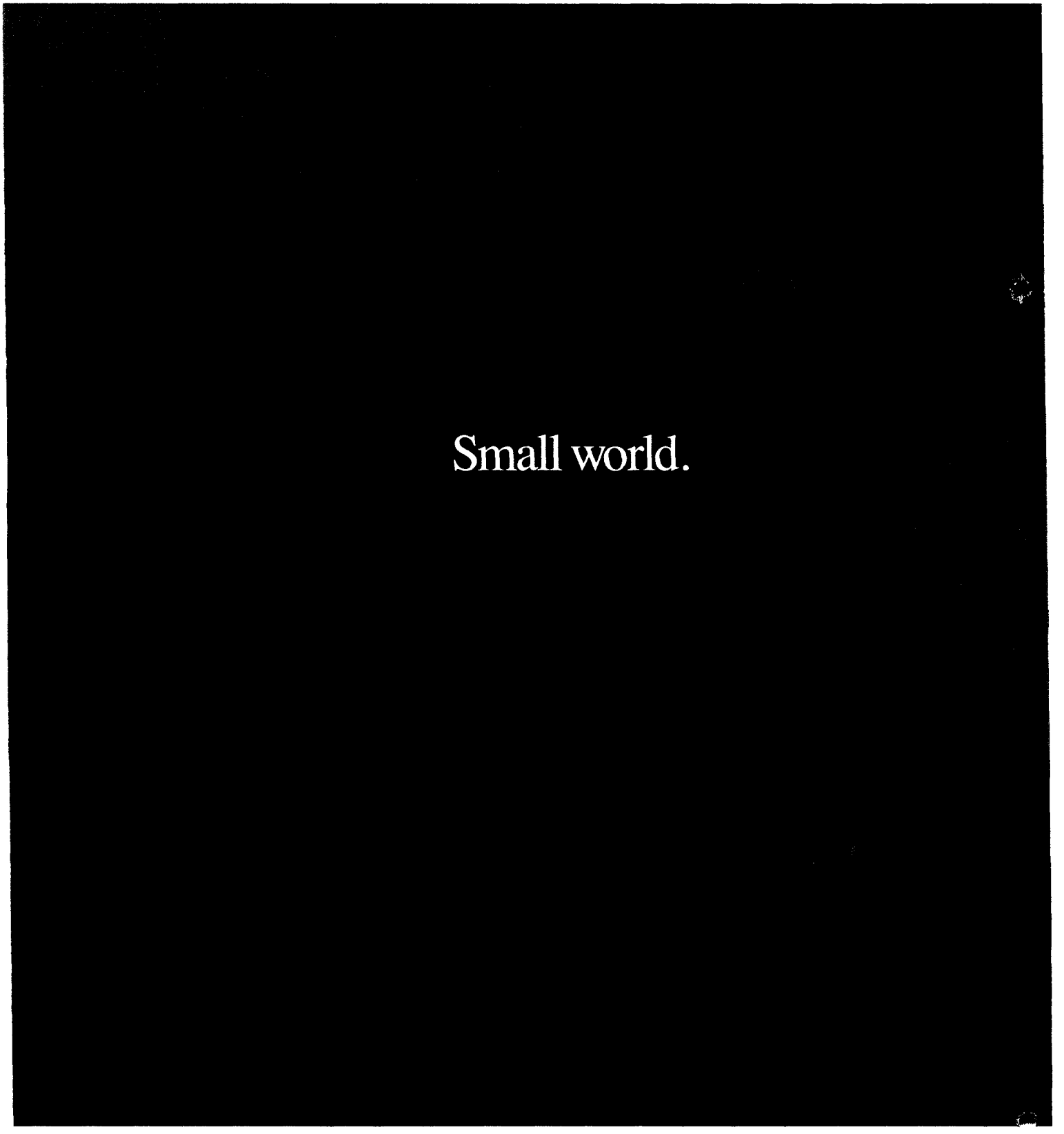

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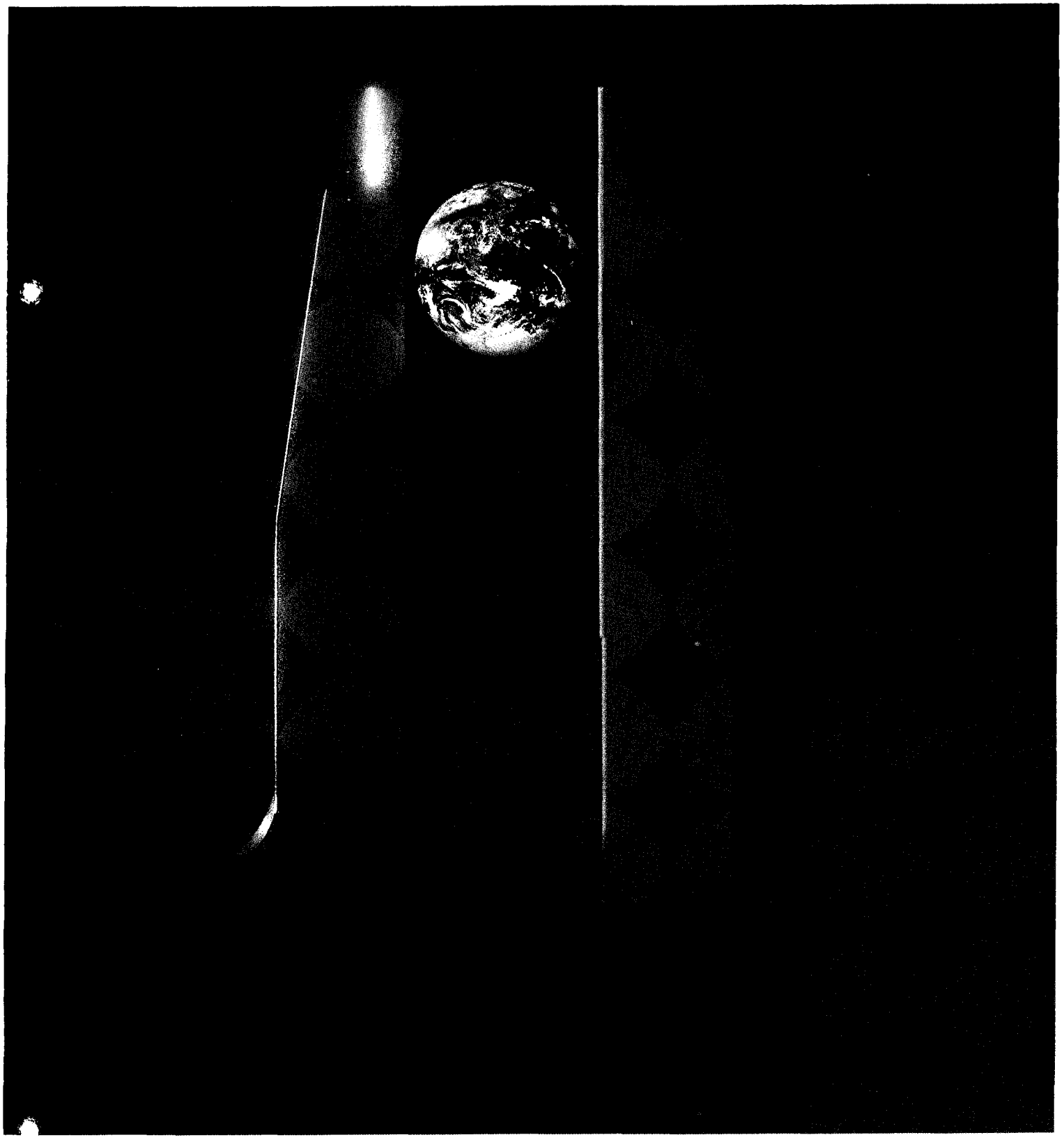

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situation or outcome. A discussion in a recent book on race and rights by Patricia Williams, *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*, plays the victim card to achieve both ends simultaneously. Acknowledging that the Tawana Brawley accusations were part of a hoax, Williams goes on to say that doesn't really matter. For Brawley was a victim of "some unspeakable crime" even "if she did it to herself." She was the victim of a "meta-rape," and this secures both her victim status and the power plays of those who cynically manipulated the situation.

Suppose one shifts the terrain to an instance in which a woman is cast as both victim and victimizer. How does the difference argument—which seeks to preserve her victim status while simultaneously denying that she could, as well, abuse or "oppress" others—play out? Take a recent, dreadful case in Nashville, Tennessee. The facts are not in dispute. Summoned to an apartment by a man named Michael Bordis whose infant son had "stopped breathing," Metro Police confronted a horrific scene. They found a 13-week-old baby boy in the early stages of decomposition. The room occupied by the baby and his half-brother smelled so strongly of feces and urine that it "literally turned your stomach," according to the Metro Police detective who happened first on the scene. The infant's filthy 4-year-old half-brother was himself hungry and underweight. It appeared that he fed himself from the refrigerator and had been left alone with the starving infant.

Police arrested Bordis and his wife, Claudette. While in custody and awaiting trial, Claudette Bordis wrote her husband love letters exalting his sexual prowess in graphic terms and describing her favorite sexual activities with him.

Claudette Bordis went to trial first. According to her defense attorneys, the 23-year-old was the *real victim.* They mounted a defense based on the "battered woman syndrome," an exculpatory strategy not available in principle to a male defendant. She could "not be held accountable" for the neglect and death of her child because she was in thrall to her abusive, domineering husband. Although the husband was away at work all day, she claimed to be so bedeviled that it didn't occur to her to care for her child. She never intended to do wrong. To hold her responsible for her deeds was either a "male deal or a prosecution deal or a society deal, but some people just don't get it," the defense attorney insisted.

The defense called a psychologist to the stand who testified that Bordis was "stressed out." This explained the fact that she neglected to feed her son. It also accounted for why she agreed to "dress like a prostitute" and accompany her husband to bars where they picked up men for three-way sexual encounters. Finally, the psychologist testified that the "battered woman syndrome" propelled Bordis to exchange sexually explicit letters with seven male prisoners in other states following her incarceration. The psychologist claimed: "I think our society has conditioned women to accept that they're to serve the men." On this the defense rested. Note that her lawyer did not use the insanity defense; rather, the argument was that Bordis had been robotized by living with a lout. As a victim, her human responsibilities collapsed and she became mere putty in his hands—and this diminished entity could scarcely be held accountable for victimizing another.

The prosecutors weren't having any of it. Tacitly they offered a distinction between extenuating circumstances and exculpatory conditions. They agreed that Bordis was a disturbed woman and had been long before she married her creepy husband. But this didn't inhibit her ability to distinguish right from wrong. They insisted that she was just as accountable as her husband, perhaps even more so, for the knowing torment of her slowly starving child. She had the baby throughout the day and chose not to feed him. The Metro Public Defender's claim that the jurors had a duty to find Bordis "not guilty" because she was a victim of battered woman syndrome amounted to a "trumped-up defense" that itself constituted "an insult to women in the community who are battered." The prosecutor told the jury that Bordis could have put her infant in the hands of others to care for. She could have called her family—her mother had, at one point, cared for the woman's older child. She had choices and she chose, on some level, to destroy her child.

The jury, accepting the prosecutor's argument, found Bordis guilty of first-degree murder. Her husband goes on trial for the same offense soon. The jury decision prompted a letter to the *Tennessean*, one of Nashville's two daily newspapers, from Bordis's mother decrying the verdict and proclaiming, in language more and more familiar in contemporary cultural, legal, and political argument, that Bordis herself was the "victim." She was a "victim" of abuse and now a "victim of society's unwillingness to educate themselves." In fact, the grandmother continued, "I am a victim. I lost a grandson." As a victim she had suffered and her daugh-

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ter had suffered and, for this reason, the daughter should be let off the hook as she was not responsible for what she did.

What are we to make of all this, and how does it connect to the heated debate over difference? In my own work over the years I have attempted to steer a course between a harsh rejection of difference and a strong plea that men and women seem to inhabit incommensurable moral, cognitive, ethical, and political universes. The stern rejection of any possibility of difference seems mistaken in its desire to forge one generic human standard and its refusal to countenance all distinctions that cannot be traced to some alterable arrangement in social structures; the second seems crazy in its refusal to see how much all creatures we call "human" share and in its repudiation of any possibility of reciprocity and commonality between men and women. Most feminist discourse operates somewhere in this middle range, although the antinomies—denial of difference altogether or making of difference an absolute—pop up more and more these days.

The Bordis case demonstrates how pernicious a difference argument can become when taken to exculpatory extremes. Women are not responsible human agents. They are once again found wanting in what Aristotle called a "deliberative" faculty. The Nashville jury refused to go this route. But other juries have bought a variety of exculpatory strategies, including the so-called PMS (pre-menstrual stress) defense, which has been used to clear women of charges including driving to endanger, assault, child abuse, even murder. In this matter women cannot indefinitely have it both ways. It is terrible to be abused. But for a 23-year-old woman with a range of options still open to her, despite her entanglement in a wretched relationship, to starve an infant to death is more terrible yet. Moral responsibility doesn't come to us in neat packages, one tied with a blue ribbon, the other in pink. Those who demand full civic standing must be prepared for its responsibilities and its burdens.

JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN is the Centennial Professor of Political Science and Professor of Philosophy at Vanderbilt University.

Live from a Women's Studies conference.

SISTER SOLDIERS

By Christina Hoff Sommers

The Hyatt Regency in Austin, Texas, is a pleasant hotel, but not all of the 500 participants in this year's National Women's Studies Association Conference were happy with it. One woman from a well-known Southern college complained about the weddings held there throughout the weekend. "Why have they put us in a setting where *that* sort of thing is going on?" she demanded.

Dissatisfaction was a conference motif. The keynote speaker, Annette Kolodny, a feminist literary scholar and until recently dean of the humanities faculty at the University of Arizona, opened the proceedings with a brief history of the "narratives of pain" within the NWSA. She reported that ten years ago the organization "almost came apart over outcries by our lesbian sisters that we had failed adequately to listen to their many voices." Five years ago sisters in the Jewish Caucus had wept at their own "sense of invisibility." Three years later the Disability Caucus threatened to quit, and the next year the women of color walked out. A pernicious bigotry, Kolodny confessed, persisted in the NWSA. "Our litanies of outrage . . . overcame our fragile consensus of shared commitment, and the center would no longer hold."

At past conferences oppressed women accused other women of oppressing them. Participants met in groups defined by their grievances and healing needs: Jewish Women, Jewish Lesbians, Asian American Women, African American Women, Old Women, Disabled Women, Fat Women, Women Whose Sexuality Is in Transition. None of the groups proved stable: the fat group polarized into gay and straight factions, and the Jewish women discovered that they were deeply divided: some accepted being Jewish, others were seeking to recover from it. This year concern extended to "marginalized" allergy groups. Participants were sent advance notice not to bring perfumes, dry-cleaned clothing, hair spray, or other dangerous irritants to the conference out of concern for allergic sisters. Hyperconcern is now the norm: at the first National Lesbian Convention in Atlanta flash cameras

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were outlawed—they might bring on epileptic fits.

Eleanor Smeal, the former president of NOW, was scheduled to be the first speaker on the NWSA "Empowerment Panel," but her plane had been held up in Memphis. To pass the time, we were introduced to an array of panelists who were touted as being experienced in conflict resolution. One woman was introduced as a member of the Mohawk nation who "facilitates anti-bias training." Another, who had training as a holistic health practitioner, headed workshops that "creatively optimize human capacity."

Still no Smeal. A panelist named Angela took the mike to tell about "ouch experiences." An "ouch" is when you experience racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, ableism, ageism, or lookism. One of Angela's biggest ouches came after her lesbian support group splintered into two factions, black and white. Tension then developed in her black group between those whose lovers were black and those whose lovers were white. "Those of us in the group who had white lovers were immediately targeted.... It turned into a horrible mess.... I ended up leaving that group for self-protection."

A weary Eleanor Smeal finally arrived and was pressed into service. She confided that she was feeling discouraged about the feminist movement. "We need totally new concepts.... In many ways it's not working. It is so depressing.... We are leaving ... the next generation [in a] mess." Smeal's liveliest moment came when she attacked "liberal males on the campus," saying, "They have kept us apart. They have marginalized our programs. We need fighting madness." Still, Smeal's talk was a downer, and the moderator hastened to raise our spirits: "What we want to do now is to dwell for a minute in success.... Think about the fact that we have been so successful in transforming the curriculum...." It was soon time for a song.

We are sisters in a circle. We are sisters in a struggle. Sisters one and all. We are colors of the rainbow. Sisters one and all.

As it happened, I did have a real sister (in the unexciting biological sense) with me at the conference. Louise and I were relieved when the proceedings were interrupted by a coffee break. Half-and-half was available—though perhaps not for long. The eco-feminist caucus has been pushing to eliminate all meat, fish, eggs, and dairy products at NWSA events. As the break ended, Phyllis, the panelist from the Mohawk nation, holding two little puppets, a dog and a teddy bear, came round to inform us, "Teddy and his friend say its time to go back inside."

Inside, Phyllis led us in some healing exercises.

Let us take a moment to give ourselves a big hug. Let me remind us that the person we're hugging is the most important person we have in our life.

After the morning session Louise and I visited the Exhibition Hall. There, dozens of booths offered women's studies books and paraphernalia. Witchcraft and goddess worship supplies were in aisle one. Adjoining aisles sold handmade jewelry, leather crafts, ponchos, and other peasant apparel. One booth offered videos on do-it-yourself menstrual extractions and home abortions for those who want to avoid "patriarchal medicine." Available for viewing throughout the conference were such films as "Sex and the Sandinistas" and "We're Talking Vulva."

The philosopher Paula Rothenberg spotted me and approached. She knows I am a skeptic. "I am very uncomfortable having you here. I saw you taking notes. We are in the middle of working through our problems. I feel as if you have come into the middle of my dysfunctional family, and you are seeing us at the worst possible moment."

But Rothenberg's "dysfunctional family" has had many such moments. Ouchings and mass therapy are more the norm than the exception in academic feminism. Last year, at a meeting of Women's Studies Program Directors, everyone joined hands to form a "healing circle." They also assumed the posture of trees experiencing rootedness and tranquillity. Victim testimonials and New Age healing rituals routinely crowd out the reading of academic papers at NWSA conferences. Out of approximately 100 workshops and presentations at the Austin meetings, I counted no more than sixteen that could generously be called scholarly.

Does it matter that a bunch of high-strung, anti-intellectual, chronically offended, "dysfunctional family members" get together for a conference and say and do a lot of odd things? It does, because on more and more campuses these consciousness-raisers are driving out the scholars. Within the past fifteen years the academy has witnessed the inception of more than 500 Women's Studies Programs and more than 30,000 courses, along with the formation of some fifty major feminist institutes. Most of the women who attended this conference are in the academy in one capacity or another: either teaching women's studies, directing programs, or in the administration. Others head women's centers.

These women run the largest growth area in the academy, and they have strong influence in some key areas, most notably in English departments (especially freshman writing courses), French departments, history departments, law schools, and divinity schools. They are disproportionately represented in the dean of students' office, in the dormitory administration, in the harassment office, and various counseling centers. They are quietly engaged in hundreds of well-funded projects to transform a curriculum that they regard as unacceptably "androcentric." Their moral authority comes from a widespread belief that they represent "women." In fact, their version of feminism falls short of being representative.

Most American women subscribe philosophically to an older "First Wave" kind of feminism whose main goal is equity. A First Wave or "equity feminist" wants for women what she wants for everyone: fair treatment, no discrimination. The equity feminist crusade that

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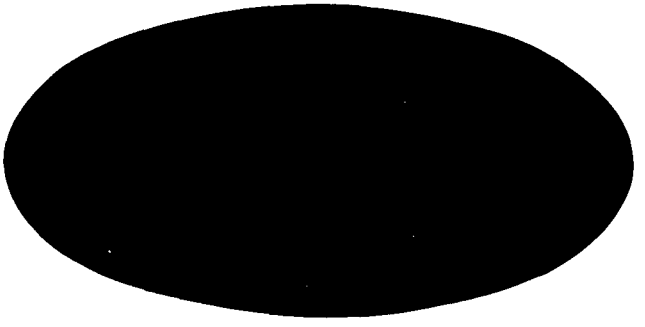
TUNE IN TO THE WORLD



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was initiated more than 150 years ago called for constitutional changes to guarantee equal opportunity, especially in politics and education. The equity agenda may not yet be fully achieved, but by any reasonable measure equity feminism is a great American success story.

Women's studies practitioners ride the First Wave for its popularity and its moral authority, but most adhere to a more radical "Second Wave" doctrine: that women, even modern American women, are in thrall to "a system of male dominance," variously referred to as "hetero-patriarchy," or the "sex/gender system." According to one feminist theorist, it is "a system of male-dominance made possible by men's control of women's productive and reproductive labor." Another describes it as "that complex process whereby bisexual infants are transformed into male and female gender personalities, the one destined to command, the other to obey."

Heady claims are made for the new way of looking at society and its impact on scholarship. According to the philosopher Elizabeth Minnich, "What we are doing is comparable to Copernicus shattering our geo-centricity, Darwin shattering our species-centricity. We are shattering andro-centricity, and the change is as fundamental, as dangerous, as exciting."

Some feminist scholarship is innovative, sound, and necessary. Literary scholars have discovered and rescued many gifted women writers from undeserved oblivion. Women historians and social scientists have found that much previous research did not apply to women. The best research on women does not use the gynocentric prism, but unfortunately a good deal of what is assigned in women's studies classes falls into the latter category. The amenable student learns to unmask the subtle, inimical workings of patriarchy. Committed instructors declare their classrooms "liberated zones" where "silenced women" will be free for the first time to speak out in a "safe" ambience.

What sort of approach to learning *would* satisfy the Second Wave feminist scholars? We get an idea by looking at a "model" introductory women's studies course developed by twelve Rutgers University professors. One of the stated goals of the course is to "challenge and change the social institutions and practices that create and perpetuate systems of oppression." Forty percent of the student's grade is to come from (1) performing some "outrageous" and "liberating" act outside of class and then sharing feelings and reactions with the class; (2) Keeping a journal of "narratives of personal experience, expressions of emotion, dream accounts, poetry, doodles, etc."; and (3) Forming small in-class consciousness-raising groups.

The exhilaration of feeling themselves at the cutting edge of a new consciousness infuses some feminist pedagogues with a doctrinal fervor unique in the academy. "The feminist classroom," say four professors from the University of Massachusetts–Amherst,

> is the place to use what we know as women to appropriate and transform, totally, a domain which has been men's.... Let us welcome the intrusion/infusion of emotionality—love, rage, anxiety, eroticism—into intellect as a step toward healing the fragmentation capitalism and patriarchy have demanded from us.

The anti-rational character of feminist pedagogy has not impeded its burgeoning growth on today's campuses. Most faculty have been skeptical, but at the same time passive and permissive. Administrations have been cooperative. The one academic estate that resists are the students; but students have little political standing on the American campus.

An undergraduate may take Freshman Composition, Baroque Art, or Egyptology and discover on the first day of class that it will be taught from a "gynocentric" perspective. Students tend to like opinionated teachers who breathe commitment, but even so most are not buying the story of a gender war. Women's studies professors often describe their classrooms as being in "crisis" because of "rebellious students," a situation that has been aggravated because, on so many campuses, women's studies courses are now mandatory. Instructors tell of the inevitable "midsemester blow-up" in which students protest angrily about the one-sidedness of courses. Feminist pedagogues call it the "blame the messenger" reaction, or the "denial" stage. Ordinarily, instructors facing persistent student protests would be moved to reconsider their own methods and arguments. But in the feminist classroom, opposition, counterargument, or complaints about methods serve primarily to convince the instructor that she is encountering backlash. At the Austin conference the "White Male Student Hostility" workshop was packed.

To succeed as they have, feminist academics needed strong support from friendly administrators. They got this in two ways: first, by entering administrative positions in disproportionate numbers, and second, by

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doing all they could to get cooperative people into positions of power. Increasingly, aspiring presidents, deans, professors, and program directors in all academic fields have to pledge allegiance to feminist educational agendas. The American Association of Colleges disseminates a widely used questionnaire titled "It's All in What You Ask: Questions for Search Committees to Use." Among the questions: How have you demonstrated your commitment to women's issues in your current position? What is your relation to the women's center? How do you deal with backlash and denial?

The proposition that "the knowledge base" must be radically "transformed" along feminist lines is now asserted by prestigious mainstream educational organizations such as the American Association of University Women and the American Council on Education. According to the ACE, the feminist challenges to "conventional ways of knowing and thinking" set a new agenda: "What has yet to happen on all of our campuses is the transformation of knowledge, and therefore of the curriculum."

At the root of all transformation projects is the thesis that not just people but also ideas and disciplines are gendered. But, as the academic promoters of the politics of sexual identity are beginning to learn, gender is not sacrosanct as a principle of social division. Why should identity politics be stabilized at two? A woman can be simultaneously a victim and, depending on her race and physical status, a white, able-bodied oppressor of Latinas, black males, and the disabled. The middle-class educated women who discovered the sex-gender system are now being forced to regard themselves as oppressors in a complex ecology of domination and subjugation.

One would normally expect that more objective academics would quickly demolish the claims being made for feminist theory. That they hold back is a tribute to the reputation feminists have for their ruthless ways of dealing with unfriendly comment. Adverse criticism is never examined with any seriousness. Instead the critic is denounced as reactionary. Few disinterested scholars have been willing to take on the unrewarding job of critically examining feminist arguments. When the respected Shakespeare scholar Richard Levin took issue with some of the more fanciful feminist interpretations of Shakespeare's tragedies, he was denounced and ridiculed in the *Publication of the Modern Language Association*. One particularly nasty letter boasted twenty-four signatories: signing in groups is a standard feature of feminist critical response.

But the faculty's incapacity to impede the radical feminist colonization of the liberal academy cannot be ascribed to mere timidity. The deeper reason is that a confused academic community has persistently failed to distinguish between the "First Wave" equity feminism, which is responsible for the main achievements of feminism in this century, and the Second Wave gynocentric feminism, which since the early '70s has taken center stage in the universities.

Gender feminists sometimes boast among themselves about the way they use naive liberal sentiment to gain their ends. Paula Goldsmid, a former dean at Oberlin College, muses: "You might wonder ... how we managed to generate a Women's Studies program that has a catalog supplement listing more than twenty courses, that offers an Individual Major in Women's Studies, that has been able to involve several committees in really working to transform the academy in various ways." She then notes with cozy candor, "There is a great reluctance to say or do anything publicly that goes against the liberal and 'progressive' Oberlin stance. Oberlin's liberal values can be turned to *our* advantage."

But is it to the advantage of women students? Two years ago I wrote to the British novelist and philosopher Iris Murdoch, asking for her views on some recent trends in women's studies. In her response she said:

> Men "created culture" because they were free to do so, and women were treated as inferior and made to believe they were. Now free women must join in the human world of work and creation on an equal footing and be everywhere in art, science, business, politics, etc.... However, to lay claim, in this battle, to *female* ethics, *female* criticism, *female* knowledge ... is to set up a new female ghetto. (Chauvinist males should be delighted by the move....) "Women's Studies" can mean that women are led to read mediocre or peripheral books by women rather than the great books of humanity in general.... It is a dead end, in danger of simply separating women from the mainstream thinking of the human race. Such cults can also *waste the time* of young people who may be reading all the latest books on feminism instead of studying the difficult and important things that belong to the culture of humanity.

The universal liberal ideal of a culture of humanity was not a theme of the Austin conference. On the contrary, the self-imposed segregation of women was everywhere in evidence.

This convention received a warm letter from Governor Ann Richards welcoming us to the Great State of Texas. The governor called the assembled feminists "the vanguard of the latest incarnation of the women's movement," praising their leadership as essential. The NWSA audience broke out into thunderous applause as the letter was read aloud. It is, however, unlikely that Richards was aware of the goddess worship booths, the menstrual extraction videos, the teddy bear puppets, the paranoid exposés of "phallocentric discourse"—let alone the bullying of students and the implacable hostility to all exact thinking as "male." Less innocently benighted are such government agencies or foundations as the Department of Education, the Ford Foundation, and the Mellon Foundation—which keep groups like the NWSA "empowered." Those who irresponsibly abet the spirit of Austin have much to answer for. Perhaps, in penance, they should be made to view the tapes of the conference and then asked to hug themselves till they "ouch." •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Ballotomanes

The last scene of **Bob Roberts** (Paramount) is set in the Jefferson Memorial in Washington; the last shot is a heroic view of Jefferson's statue. This is depressing. *Bob Roberts*, written and directed by Tim Robbins with himself in the title role, is about a senatorial election campaign in Pennsylvania, but it obviously has national resonance; and after the hokum, hustling, and hoopla of a modern election, that last glimpse of Jefferson really hurts. Try to imagine him campaigning today.

Of course the politicking of the past was not Parnassian. But to imagine that a Jefferson today could campaign as he did back then is fantasy. That last glimpse of him is bitter because it makes us wonder whether a Jefferson today would consent to run for public office. Even the obviously more desirable of the two current presidential candidates appears on late-night T.V. in shades with saxophone.

The electioneering razzle-dazzle of *Bob Roberts* has long been the stuff of satire. The sound-bite mentality has been pilloried. Result? Zero. Not one iota of improvement—quite the reverse, an increase. Today political satire is born spayed or gelded, partly because (as is often said) reality outdoes it but also because of something that follows from this fact. Political satire has become a sort of love-in at which the makers and receivers can feel superior to the rest of the world without any risk, because everyone concerned knows that the satire will have absolutely no effect.

Bob Roberts, a satire, has plenty of verve, but it suffers from those two conditions. Bob's blatant crowd-wooings will amuse or disgust those already amused or disgusted by the real stuff. His country music (written by Robbins and his brother David) and his music videos are in a sense familiar. He sets his sights on Quayle's people, the culturally non-elite, but Quayle has done it before him, more nakedly. His main issues are drugs and material acquisition: he is against one and for the other. (Unlike the two Pats, Buchanan and Robertson, he doesn't thunder against abortion or homosexuality or feminism.) So, fairly early, we can snuggle in with our neighbors as the better sort of persons to whom this film is addressed.

But that's certainly not the same as boredom. *Bob Roberts* is, as cinema, continuously exciting. Bob put away $40 mil on Wall Street (faint echo of Perot) before he went into country music successfully, then into politics. (Read movies for music, and it's Reagan.) His story is told in the form of a documentary being made by a Brit crew whose director is Brian Murray: thus the film contains matter that Bob might not want us to see.

The incumbent senator is played by Gore Vidal, plump. (The senator's monologues, on the conspiracy between government and arms manufacturers, are pure Vidal, probably written—nay, extemporized—by him.) The chief drama comes from a radical black journalist, electrically played by Giancarlo Esposito, who dogs Bob's campaign and finally unearths a shocking scandal, political not sexual. Near the end, the plot takes a turn possibly suggested by George Wallace, but the final twist has nothing to do with Wallace and is thoroughly phony. It jars the otherwise credible film.

What holds us throughout, besides the wonder that *Bob Roberts* was actually made in these constricted days, are its directing, editing, and cinematography. The pace never lags; but, though it's usually fast, it's never hurried. Lisa Churgin's editing is intelligent, acute. The camerawork by Jean Lepine, who (like Robbins) has worked with Robert Altman, is fine throughout but is particularly so in the hand-held mode. Lately there's been a rash of long tracking sequences: in *Goodfellas*, *The Player*, *The Bonfire of the Vanities*. Lepine, guided by Robbins, ranks with the best in a hand-held sequence that pursues the hurrying Bob and pals through the bowels of a theater.

This is Robbins's directing debut, and as such it's a smasher. Besides the drive with which he makes the picture hurtle forward, he dabs in some excellent unstressed moments (some of the best satire in the piece). When Bob and entourage come out a stage door into an alley, the camera pans quickly—without emphasis—past a ragged man picking through garbage to beam on the happy group.

Robbins the screenwriter has worked well with Robbins the director. The per-

FILMS WORTH SEEING

The Best Intentions. *Bille August compassionately directs Ingmar Bergman's Strindbergian screenplay about his parents' courtship and early marriage. (Reviewed 8/10/92)* **A Brief History of Time.** *Stephen Hawking's life and work is necessarily synopsized but fascinating in Errol Morris's straightforward documentary. (9/28/92)* **Diggstown.** *A somewhat rickety comic script about a boxing frame-up in a small town, well acted by James Woods and Louis Gossett Jr. and smartly directed by Michael Ritchie. (9/21/92)* **Howards End.** *It's even better the second time, as many have discovered. Forster's masterpiece was adapted as well as could be expected and was directed and acted far above expectation. (3/23/92)* **—SK**

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sistence of some youths infatuated with Bob is wittily counterpointed with the main story. The movement of the black journalist from the film's periphery to its core is exceptionally deft. The treatment of Bob's wife is a small gem of implication. She is never seen except to join him for ovations at ends of speeches and for parades—which tells us everything we need to know about his marriage and what he thinks of his wife. All these are good materials given by the writer to a director who knew how to use them.

Robbins's work with his actors is sharp. He might have lightened Alan Rickman's touch as Bob's serpentine mentor, and he might have lessened Vidal's head-wagging, but the only actor he doesn't deal with adequately is himself. His performance lacks the last over-the-top charge that it needs. It's as if he were slightly spent by setting up scenes before he got to shoot them.

I'd guess that Robbins knows Elia Kazan's *A Face in the Crowd* (1957), in which a country singer forges a political career, and Michael Ritchie's *The Candidate* (1972), about a senatorial campaign. (Does anyone remember Norman Taurog's *The Phantom President,* 1932, which has George M. Cohan playing a double role?) *The Candidate* is still the best film I know about an American election—darkly ironic where *Bob Roberts* slashes nearer the surface. Still, Robbins's triple-threat debut discloses true strengths and possibilities.

Coincidence provides *Bob Roberts* with something more than a footnote. Reality—on film, as well as on paper—crowds in to compete with fiction. A new documentary called **Feed** (Original Cinema) looks at campaigning highly realistically but from an angle that makes many of the facts funny. Directed by Kevin Rafferty and James Ridgeway, with important additional footage by Brian Springer, it follows all the candidates in the New Hampshire primary this year and, simply by paying close attention, becomes a comedy.

Much of *Feed* (which had its premiere at the Film Forum in New York) is about the usual trafficking of candidates and keeps reminding us of *Bob Roberts.* (The other way 'round, of course, if you see *Feed* first. Depends on whether you want life to imitate art or vice versa.) There are the repellent parts, as when Arnold Schwarzenegger, before a cheering crowd, refers to all the Democratic candidates as "girly-boys." There are the wry parts, as when Hillary Clinton, greeting folks in the street, shakes hands with a homeless drunk and thanks him for his support. (The Gennifer Flowers story, unwry, is present, too.) But the fun comes in the segments for which *Bob Roberts* has no equivalent: when each of the candidates, Republican and Democrat, is waiting to be "fed"—waiting for a cue to begin addressing a T.V. camera with material that will be fed by a satellite to a network.

No one looks more suspended and dumb than a speaker waiting for a cue from a T.V. director; and nothing more trenchantly underscores the fawning reliance of American politics on T.V.—not what the candidates say but the way they wait to speak, fidgeting, adjusting ties, worrying about makeup, trying not to be irritated with the medium that they so frantically need.

The funniest of the lot is Bush. The film opens with him behind a desk, waiting for his cue, making affable remarks to the crew, then just waiting, waiting, waiting. Every once in a while in the course of the film, Rafferty and Ridgeway cut back to Bush, still sitting at a desk, still waiting. When the film is over, they cut back to him, still waiting, as the closing credits roll over him. He has the last words, as he responds to a question that comes through his earpiece: "Fine. How are *you*?"

This is one for the time capsule. •

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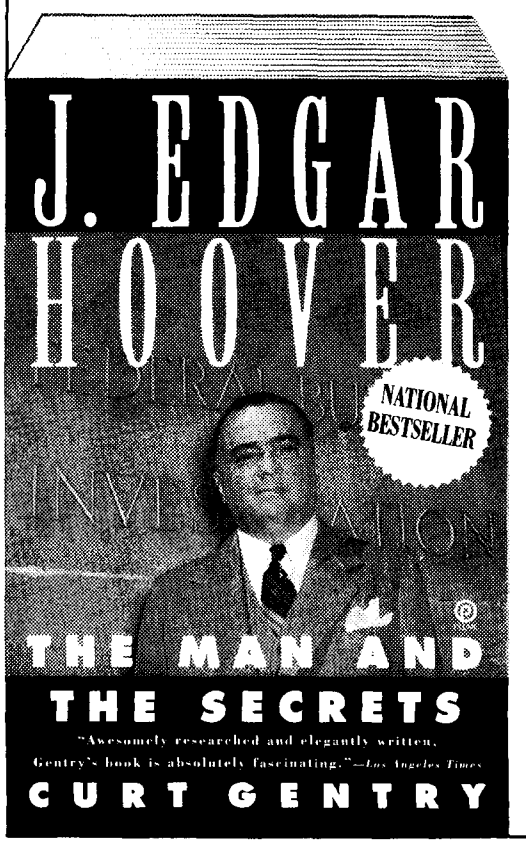
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Ecce Homo

By Alfred Kazin

Live from Golgotha by Gore Vidal

(Random House, 232 pp., $22)

Screening History by Gore Vidal

(Harvard University Press, 96 pp., $14)

The Decline and Fall of the American Empire by Gore Vidal

(Odonian Press, 95 pp., $5 paper)

"American life for the writer is so desperate that it has driven Gore Vidal to live abroad." —Erica Jong, *The New York Observer*, June 29, 1990

One night in Rome, in 1975, the Italian journalist Luigi Barzini told me that Gore Vidal was thinking of becoming an Italian citizen and had sought his advice on the matter. Barzini was beside himself with scorn, but I was impressed. Until then I had not seen Vidal as the exasperated radical that he claimed to be; he seemed to be playing the part of a weary patrician at Hollywood dinner tables, where it was easier to chatter on about America as a "sinking ship" than to describe hard-pressed American lives in his novels. And I understood his addiction to apocalyptic images as rage against the demeaning of homosexual love. "The heterosexual dictatorship has got to go!" he once wrote. "And I'm here to challenge it, and I'm here every time I can put an end to it."

Of course Vidal not only adored Italy (what American writer discovering it after the war did not!) but could actually afford to live there much of the year, year after year. He was in a few years to acquire a magnificent estate in Ravello perching on the Mediterranean coast. But for a writer so dependent on the American market, and so enthusiastically playing the part of an American grandee in devastated Italy, even to think of joining himself to this scene as a naturalized Italian! Clearly, I had missed the man's very real political despair, the intellectual darkness he favored and its sense of urgency.

The urgency has also to do with his other favorite role: the anti-Christian revivalist of paganism. Nothing would be more foolish than to regard *Live from Golgotha*, Vidal's farce parodying Acts of the Apostles (it follows the Gospels in the New Testament and describes St. Paul's missionary journeys to extend the still primitive Church), as nothing but bawdy entertainment for the bathhouse boys; since nothing about the human body, what it can do and what can be done to it, including all incessant acts of violence, war, and so on, is news even to children watching television, *Live from Golgotha*, though it tries to shock, is actually no dirtier than anything else these days. What makes Vidal's book different are its "pagan" emphases, its affirmations. The only unsullied character in the book is Petronius singing the soft winds of classic Italy. Vidal made a point of allowing only a gay magazine, *The Advocate*, to see the text before the publication date. But since any normal person these days is more interested in sex than in religion, the joke is on the book buyers. Vidal's target in this book is Christianity, which was founded by Jews.

The book is full of clowns, fools, and monsters, but its only villain is Jesus. He disapproves of the Church founded in his name, and at the end he gladly describes himself as a "twentieth-century Zionist terrorist" who looks forward to establishing the Kingdom of God in the next century, replete with Isaiah's "ring of fire," for nationalistic reasons. For this, he deserves crucifixion.

Vidal's Jesus envisions an eventual nuclear holocaust on the goyim. His New Testament Jews are disgusting as well as dangerous. So the novel opens on the circumcision of Paul's gofer Timothy, the future bishop and saint. This was reluctantly ordered by his boss and lover Paul, in order to placate the still Jewish Jews (especially James the brother of Jesus) who were the first Christians.

Paul, always laughingly put down here by Timothy as "Saint," is Elmer Gantry with an immense Rolodex, a super salesman who orders "follow-up" letters to the newly reborn once his sales pitch has had its effect and he is pushed on to find fresh suckers. Timothy ("I have golden hyacinthine curls and cornflower-blue, forget-me-not eyes and the largest dick in our part of Asia Minor") is too gorgeous in his own eyes to respect the scrawny, money-mad, clownish salesman (a tap dancer in his spare moments) he sleeps with. But you have to hand it to a Jew who "ate with goyim,... christened goyim,... was having carnal knowledge of a teen-age Greek with two centimeters of rose-velvety foreskin, me."

Thanks to computer technology, fast forwards, memory banks, and the like, the joke on which the plot rests is that these biblical characters are brought to our own day, if not quite as flesh and blood. Because print has gone out of style and the history of the Church now exists only in memory banks, Timothy and friends have to save their own history from some devilish hacker who has introduced a virus that threatens to cheat mankind of the true story. This includes such tidbits as the fact that Judas, not Jesus, was happily mistaken for the Messiah to be crucified. The sap weighed 400 pounds, and how would the Romans get him up on the cross?

Since the novel constantly jerks from the first decades of the twentieth century to the last, we are supposed to die of laughter when all the forces of contemporary television are mustered to present the Big Event on Golgotha. But at the very last moment the hacker is revealed to be Jesus, the enemy of the one written record that Timothy has saved (in a janitor's closet). Because Jesus gladly admits that he is the King of the Jews, his effort "to erase Paul's work and bring on a nuclear Judgment Day was simply not in the cards. He had lost. We had won. Christianity was saved, as well as the residents of 2001 A.D."

So the true Jesus is crucified after all. As Nietzsche said, he was neither the first Jew nor the last Jew to die on the cross. But who would have expected Gore Vidal—that mere entertainer, as I

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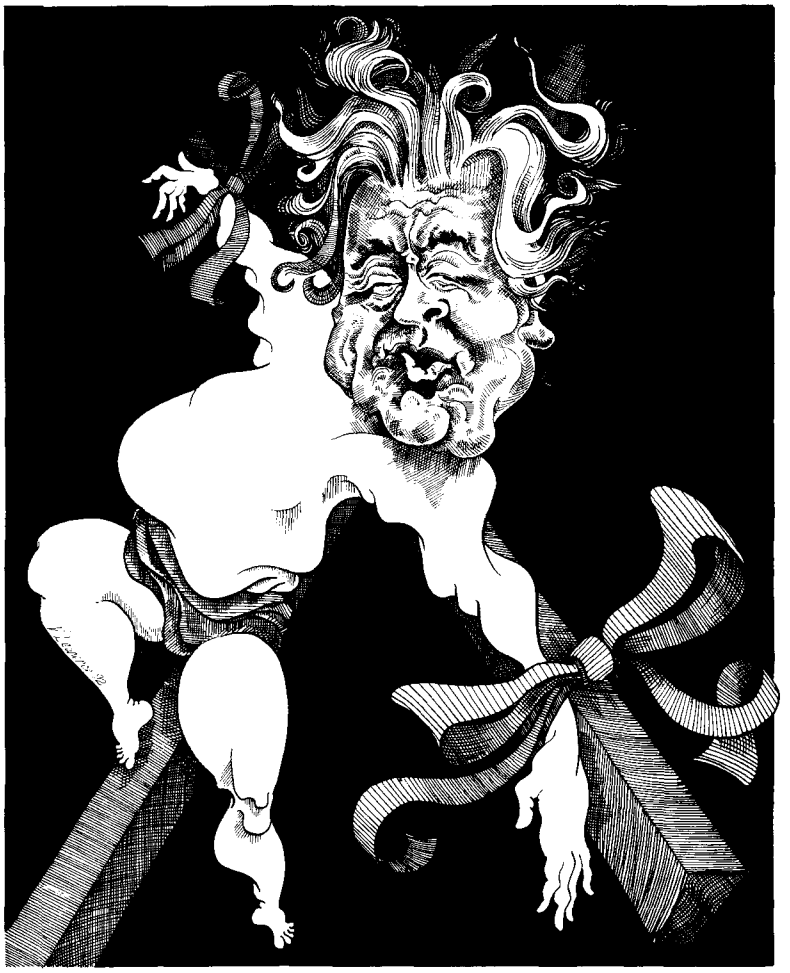
once foolishly thought him—to nail Jesus on the cross *because* he was, and forever remains, a Jew? What's wrong with that? The answer is, Vidal's Jesus is a fanatically self-limiting Jew. Jesus believed in Judgment Day, a folly that keeps the Jews frothing even now, with their tiresome inability to forget the Holocaust. This is one of the many throw-away lines in Vidal's book: "AIPAC has insisted on a twelve-part series based on how Moses and God established the Jews in Palestine forever, as well as another year of reruns of the Holocaust."

So what is Vidal's own religion? In "Monotheism and Its Discontents," the last one in his collection of think pieces for *The Nation* that is now published as *The Decline and Fall of the American Empire*, Vidal is as forthright and uncomplicated on that subject as he is about the "last days" of the United States:

> Now to the root of the matter. The great unmentionable evil at the center of our culture is *monotheism*. From a barbaric Bronze Age text known as the Old Testament, three antihuman religions have evolved—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. These are sky-god religions. They are, literally, patriarchal—God is the omnipotent father—hence the loathing of women for 2,000 years in those countries afflicted by the sky-god and his earthly male delegates.
>
> The sky-god is a jealous god, of course. He requires total obedience from everyone on earth, and he is in place not just for one tribune but of all creation. Those who would reject him must be converted or killed for their own good.
>
> Ultimately, totalitarianism is the only sort of politics that can truly serve the sky-god's purpose. Any movement of a liberal nature endangers his authority and that of his delegates on earth. One God, one King, one Pope, one master in the factory, one father-leader in the family at home.

The tone is maybe too childishly brash, the content maybe too simple to explain monotheism as a great foundation of science in human thought? Not to worry. Vidal has everything down pat, in op-ed lengths. Simone Weil, who also resented the Jews, complained of monotheism that it posited belief in one figure alone, and the removal of that figure therefore led to no belief at all. Vidal's objection is different. His "paganism" is entirely sexual. His views are those of the brilliant, angry boy at Exeter already revolting against authority. It seems that nothing about monotheism arose from human speculation about the possibly unitary nature of creation; the sky-god just imposed himself like a headmaster. Religion does not rise from the everywhere observable thirst for transcendence; it is just a racket in the hands of some priestly mafia. Beastly authority, especially the kind so hard on same-sexers, is the rule everywhere.



GORE VIDAL BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Of all these little books, the only one that gave me any pleasure, meaning relief from the clang clang of this man's too confident voice, is *Screening History*, his largely charming and almost idyllic memories of life at the movies. As the Frenchmen wistfully remembering the whorehouses of their youth said at the end of Flaubert's *L'Education sentimentale*, there, truly, was our happiness. Vidal correctly points out that Americans, or at least those of a certain generation, owe such scant knowledge of history as they possess to the costume dramas that once presented European lords and ladies, and he is right to lament the comparative absence of great American figures like Jefferson and Washington from the screen.

Vidal fondly remembers Henry Fonda playing the young Lincoln about to walk into the future. He is as good on this as he is bemoaning Hollywood's inability to present the American past. The lack of the historical sense even among supposedly educated Americans is more and more stupefying, and explains why politicians can get away with any falsehood, since for the most part they too don't know the falsehoods to be false.

But the subject of Lincoln brings to mind Vidal's own *Lincoln*, which was roundly criticized for *its* falsehoods by Lincoln scholars, whom Vidal nastily calls "Lincoln priests." As it happens, I know one of these "Lincoln priests," who is a Hungarian refugee teaching at Gettysburg College and the author of a valuable book called *Lincoln and the Economics of the American Dream*. This scholar complained that "to the general public, Vidal's is the most influential Lincoln image of our time. It is also the most insidiously ahistorical." Vidal's rebuttal: "I think 'ahistorical,' in a sense, means a lack of footnotes." This is cheap enough, and it is thoroughly beside the point. But not content to let bad enough alone, Vidal goes completely wild and notes "the historian's provenance as Stalinist Hungary because the style is that of a defender of a totalitarian regime." When I came to this sentence, I found myself saying right out loud, Shut up, Vidal! Just for once, shut up!

ALFRED KAZIN is writing *"The Almighty Has His Own Purposes": On the Religious Imagination of American Writers.*

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The Man Without Qualities

By Jacob Heilbrunn

Driven Patriot: The Life and Times of James Forrestal by Townsend Hoopes and Douglas Brinkley

(Knopf, 587 pp., $30)

Eberstadt and Forrestal: A National Security Partnership, 1909-1949 by Jeffery M. Dorwart

(Texas A&M Press, 237 pp., $35)

When James Forrestal plunged to his death from the sixteenth floor of the Bethesda Naval Hospital on May 22, 1949, Arthur Krock in *The New York Times* compared his end to Lord Castlereagh's. Almost a half century later, the parallel between Harry Truman's secretary of defense and George III's foreign secretary remains a striking one.

After orchestrating the Congress of Vienna in 1815, Castlereagh found the task of maintaining the delicate European balance of power exhausting and thankless. Vilified by parliamentarians and poets for sanctioning Turkey's brutal suppression of the Greek independence movement (Shelley introduced his *Masque of Anarchy* with the lines "I met Murder on his way, He had a mask like Castlereagh," and Byron immortalized him in *Don Juan* as "that long Spout of blood and water"), Castlereagh began to suffer fits of delirium. His once-elegant hand declined into a scrawl. He accused the Duke of Wellington and his wife, of all people, of plotting to murder him. He bewailed the "torment" of public life. Finally, eluding the vigilance of his friends, he slit his throat from ear to ear with a concealed penknife, and summoned his physician: "O Bankhead," he gasped, "I am glad you are here; I have opened my throat; it is all over."

Forrestal's last words, if there were any, have not been recorded, but the parallels with Castlereagh abound. Like Castlereagh, Forrestal immersed himself in his work and tried to suppress emotion beneath a veneer of reserve. Where Castlereagh had painstakingly constructed the Concert of Europe, Forrestal tried to bring into concert the lesser but still warring fiefdoms of the armed services of the United States. He felt that he was a "victim of the Washington scene" and scented conspirators plotting against his life. Denounced by the press for his hardline anti-communism, he, too, fell prey to hallucinations. And so the natural reaction to Forrestal's death, as to Castlereagh's, is that it was "tragic." After attending Forrestal's funeral at Arlington National Cemetery, where some 6,000 mourners watched the flag-draped casket wind its way to the chapel while nineteen-gun howitzers fired at three-minute intervals, Senator Arthur Vandenberg confided to his diary: "Of course Jimmy wasn't very big—but the casket looked *so little!*... I thought I would expire. There was something about it all which was so intimately tragic and yet so spiritually exalted."

But was Forrestal really a tragic figure on the order of Castlereagh? Was he a great statesman, maligned and misunderstood and finally brought down by malevolent foes? Or was he a fairly minor figure who, had he died a natural death, would not have occasioned books and articles devoted to deciphering the riddles of his life? Townsend Hoopes and Douglas Brinkley, the latest biographers, provide a fine opportunity to have another look at the significance of this troubled man. Their book supersedes two earlier studies, Robert G. Albion and Robert H. Connery's *Forrestal and the Navy* and Arnold Rogow's psychobiography *James Forrestal* (though the latter can still be consulted profitably). It is the first to integrate properly Forrestal's life and work. Hoopes and Brinkley have combed the archives and conducted extensive interviews with Forrestal's friends and associates. The quality of their research and the clarity of their writing surely make their book the standard work.

The book does carry, however, some unnecessary baggage. Its subject's life is occasionally swamped by his times, as the authors launch into dry historical explanations of events such as the Great Depression; some of these will be helpful to readers dimly aware of distant events, but others will feel that the narrative thread has spun out of control. Still, the book is never less than readable, and its subject is certainly of powerful interest. Forrestal's life was fascinating humanly, but it was also inextricably linked with the origins of the cold war. It may be said that he was one of its first casualties. Hoopes, who worked as an assistant to Forrestal in 1949, and Brinkley, who is a professor of history at Hofstra University, are about as successful as anybody is likely to be in penetrating Forrestal's ice sheet of reserve. They convey an almost macabre sense of a man speeding toward his demise as if it had been predestined. The remarkable thing about Forrestal's suicide is not that it occurred, but that it did not occur sooner.

Forrestal was born in 1892 in Matteawan, New York, of middle-class Irish immigrants, and his origins and early life look like pointers to his terrible end. Like Jay Gatsby, whom he resembles in many ways, Forrestal concealed his past and severed relations with his family. His father was a contractor and campaigned for Franklin Roosevelt in his bid for the New York Senate in 1910, which would stand the son in good stead in the 1940s. His mother, Mary, a stern matriarch and a Catholic school teacher, was preparing him for a life in the priesthood. Bent on surpassing his father and escaping his mother's stifling embrace, Forrestal entered Dartmouth and then transferred to Princeton. At Princeton he left the Church.

Forrestal's frosty manners won him a reputation for aloofness, though his reserve did not hamper him in pursuing friendships with wealthier classmates, and his intelligence and his literary skills did not fail to make the desired impression. One such friend was the lordly Ferdinand Eberstadt, who installed him as editor of the *Daily Princetonian* and arranged admission to the Cottage Club, described by Scott Fitzgerald, a Princeton classmate, as "an impressive mélange of brilliant adventurers and well-dressed philanderers." According to another classmate, as graduation time approached Forrestal had memorized every graduate's name and family background. Voted "Most Likely to Succeed," he was, significantly, also dubbed "The Man Nobody Knows." For reasons never explained, Forrestal dropped out just before he was to graduate: an early instance of an inability to commit himself to a course of action.

His Princeton connections landed Forrestal a job selling bonds on Wall Street for the William A. Read company, where he soon "discovered his niche ... it was

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for him a challenging enterprise that brought to bear his analytical powers, his ability to master complex detail, his orderliness and precision, his willingness to work long hours, and his persuasive political skills." Following a stint in the naval reserves as a lieutenant junior grade during World War I, he returned to the Street and the social whirl of the Jazz Age, where he soaked up the ethos of self-enrichment and sexual abandon. Living and partying on Long Island, Forrestal seemed to have broken decisively with the dour Irish disposition of his mother. Yet he maintained a Gatsbyan distance from the exclusive social set in which he was disporting himself.

While aping the dress and the speech of this circle, he preferred the image of an enigmatic onlooker. Frequently he would accept formal dinner invitations and fail to appear—for fear, as he put it, of "getting stuck." According to Hoopes and Brinkley, his "inability to commit himself deeply to any person . . . reflected a fundamental need to be independent and self-reliant, to build for himself a sort of majestic singularity that would enable him to escape the entangling compromises and humbling fetters that bind ordinary men and ordinary lives." But it proved to be tremendously debilitating: no man could maintain such Olympian heights of detachment. Forrestal lacked the right stuff for an American Caesar.

Nor was Forrestal's marriage in 1926 an exception to his weakness of will. The note he left for his friends was prophetic: "I am committing the mistake called matrimony. Name of unfortunate victim, Ogden." A former showgirl in the Ziegfeld Follies and a columnist for *Vogue*, Josephine Ogden, whom John Dos Passos described as possessing the "tall, Gainsborough look of a titled Englishwoman," captivated Forrestal. They settled on an "open" marriage, which he battened on but she could not sustain. Forrestal arranged their wedding for lunchtime in New York's Municipal Building, so that he could immediately return to work. The killing pace that he set on the Street meant that his wife was finally reduced to ornamental status. Burdened with a fragile personality and coming to view herself as "Germanic chattel," she turned to the bottle. She bore Forrestal two sons, and his emotional reserve extended to them as well. He wished never to "coddle" his sons; he kept himself remote, he believed, to "let the little bastards stand on their own feet."

On Wall Street, Forrestal's work habits may have done little for his family life, but they did make him the firm's most successful salesman and a partner. The firm's president, Clarence Dillon, a financial wizard who got the press to believe that he spent his mornings idly leafing through the classics, was Forrestal's model. He, too, began to puff on a pipe, speak in clipped sentences, and race through volumes of history and biography. His doubts about the sybaritic life of the Long Island set were followed by doubts about Wall Street, prompted by his newfound interest in things of the mind.

But Forrestal's business acumen celebrated new triumphs: he and his old Princeton mentor Eberstadt masterminded the firm's spectacular takeover of Goodyear and then of the Dodge Brothers, catapulting Dillon's firm to the head of Wall Street. Known as the "boy wonder" by 1928, Forrestal cultivated an image of cool poise, but as his appearance at New Deal hearings in 1933 indicated, his self-confidence could be shaken. Grilled by a Senate committee on the various investment trusts and holding companies he had created in order to escape paying taxes throughout the '20s, Forrestal suffered (according to his friend Eliot Janeway) "a sort of temporary nervous breakdown."

An enlightened financier, Forrestal recognized the need for stock market reform. Characteristically, as Hoopes and Brinkley show in some of the best chapters of their account, he worked in secret to promote it in order not to upset his Wall Street friends. (It was a lack of courage that he would display during his tenure in the Department of Defense.) Working with Roosevelt's right-hand man Tommy "the Cork" Corcoran and Representative Sam Rayburn, Forrestal served as an "inside man," stealthily raising money to fund the campaigns of congressmen who were prepared to vote for the breakup of public utility holding companies. In 1937 he helped William Douglas, the chairman of the Security and Exchange Commission, to draft new stock exchange rules; and in 1940 Douglas recommended Forrestal to Roosevelt. He became one of the "secret six" businessmen who worked for FDR. The combination of boredom with the Street, the sense of great challenges in government as war approached, and the realization that power had shifted from New York to Washington prompted Forrestal to seek a position in the Roosevelt administration.

During a seven-month stint in Washington in 1918, Forrestal had developed a "Frank and Jim" relationship with Roosevelt, then assistant secretary of the Navy, and decades later the president swiftly promoted him to undersecretary of the Navy. Confronted with the awesome task of assembling a two-front Navy almost single-handedly, an exhilarated Forrestal gave full rein to his talent for

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administrative reform. Just as he had quickly assembled a crack force of 750 salesmen at Dillon, Read, so now he built up the Navy bureaucracy. Soon becoming a key figure in the rearmament effort, Forrestal reorganized the Navy's antiquated procurement practices—assembling a fleet of some 1,166 warships and 41,272 aircraft—in the face of dogged opposition to reform on the part of crusty admirals like Ernest J. King.

This was the high-water mark of his career. As second-in-command Forrestal was better than at the helm. But in 1944 the secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, died, and Forrestal was the logical successor. Pictures taken at the time show him staring coldly with lips pressed into a thin line, forcing a wan smile, altogether consistent with the authors' description of him as a man assailed by self-doubt. Truman's unexpected elevation to the presidency only increased Forrestal's ambivalence. He shared the view of many at the time that a political hack had taken over.

Mistrusted by the new president as a Roosevelt holdover too popular to dismiss, Forrestal felt anything but at home with Truman and his poker-playing Missouri cronies. (Mrs. Forrestal didn't exactly help matters. When he was obliged to host a poker game for the president, she refused to leave for New York and greeted the president in a drunken stupor. Forrestal took her by the hand and forcibly led her to the bedroom, remarking, "Now, Josie, you know this is a stag party.") More importantly, Forrestal's extraordinary concentration and seemingly inexhaustible capacity for work had begun to erode. It was time to go. He toyed several times with the notion of leaving government to establish a newspaper, but each time he backed off. His vacillations exasperated his friends. Janeway complained that "he couldn't stand up and he couldn't sit down. He couldn't leave the Navy Department and he couldn't see where he was going from it."

But then a challenge appeared that seemed to fill Forrestal with a new sense of purpose: the proposed unification of the armed services. Forrestal felt a calling to stop it. The admirals were insisting that the Navy retain its independence rather than be reduced to a division of a Department of Defense subject to the orders of a single chief of staff. Spurred on by the admirals and Eberstadt, Forrestal worked to undermine Truman's unification plan. He had sacrificed all human commitments, but he identified completely with the Navy.

On this part of his career, Hoopes and Brinkley are usefully supplemented by Jeffery M. Dorwart's elegantly conceived study. Dorwart, who teaches history at Rutgers University, reveals how Forrestal depended emotionally and intellectually on Eberstadt. The order of names in his book's title is not adventitious: he shows that Eberstadt was by far the more imaginative and penetrating thinker. He provided the initiative and the energy that Forrestal had lost. As Robert Lovett perceived at the time, Forrestal was "a burnt-out case." But Eberstadt kept him going. He returned to Washington in 1945, as Dorwart notes, to bail Forrestal out of difficulties, to "give [him] the direction, the system, and the firm resolve that he lacked." With Forrestal's backing, Eberstadt drew up what would come to be known as the "Eberstadt Report"—a blueprint for the creation of a national security state consisting of businessmen running a military-industrial complex, a National Security Resources Board that would balance the nation's supply of resources with military needs, and a Central Intelligence Agency. Forrestal welcomed Eberstadt's corporatist plan because of its emphasis on the Navy as the country's first line of defense; he viewed it as a way to forestall the creation of a single military department.

Congress had traditionally favored the Navy and the Marines, and the admirals, relying on powerful allies such as Representative Carl Vinson and Senator Richard Russell, could stubbornly resist the reform that was obviously needed after World War II. Forrestal was torn between loyalty to the president and the admirals, but not torn enough. He came down on the side of the Navy, and regarded Truman's proposal of a single chief of staff as an Army plot, headed by Dwight Eisenhower, to undo the Navy. The battle with the Army further sapped Forrestal's fading powers, and his behavior became increasingly erratic. (Once in midflight he ordered his plane to turn back, suddenly balking at delivering a speech.) With solid backing from their congressional allies, the admirals got pretty much what they wanted. The National Security Act of 1947 laid the cornerstone of the national security state; it established the CIA, the National Security Council, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Air Force, and the position of secretary of defense. But it was greatly flawed—or, to put it another way, it turned out to contain many of the obstructive provisions of the Eberstadt report. The secretary of defense was given almost no staff and no real powers to curb interservice rivalries; each service secretary had direct access to the president; and the departments of the Army, Air Force, and Navy worked independently.

Well-aware that the new office of secretary of defense lacked real power to control the will of the individual services, Secretary of War Robert Patterson declined the nomination for the post. Truman, in what was close to a bad joke, reckoned that Forrestal would be unable to disrupt unification if he headed it, and named him to the post. It was condign punishment for Forrestal's rearguard battle against unification. Forrestal was sworn in as the first secretary of defense of the United States on September 17, 1947.

He continued to believe that the admirals, motivated by the same altruism and patriotism that animated him, would cooperate to make the new system work. Moreover, he thought that the secretary of defense would be free to run the newly established National Security Council, which he had been instrumental in creating, and concern himself with high politics. Hoopes and Brinkley correctly observe that "this was a central and costly misjudgment." Interservice rivalry consumed all his time. (The ruthless secretary of the Air Force, Stuart Symington, would constantly call Forrestal in order to harass him and further fray his nerves.) Forrestal seemed to recognize that his own powers as well as those conferred by the office were not up to the task. He told a well-wisher that "I shall need the good wishes and probably the combined attention of Fulton Sheen and the entire psychiatric profession by the end of the year." This was as prescient as the sardonic note about his marriage in 1926.

With his ascension to the Pentagon, Forrestal's anticommunism began to take a sharper edge. Drawn to William Bullitt, the former ambassador to the Soviet Union who had turned from being naively pro-Soviet to being virulently anti-Soviet, Forrestal took an apocalyptic view of the coming struggle with the Evil Empire. He saw the "Russians swarming over Europe," and he warned that American universities, not least Harvard, were becoming redoubts of Marxism. He began to study dialectical materialism, from a slender volume called *Aspects of Dialectical Materialism* and a survey titled *The Philosophy of Communism* by one Charles F. McFadden, which Sheen had given him. He had the idea to develop a capitalist primer that would inoculate Americans against the Marxist virus.

The defense against communism certainly made budgetary considerations irrelevant. And so Eberstadt was aghast. "The question," he instructed Forrestal, "is to discover how we can purchase security at a reasonable cost." For once Forrestal was unmoved by Eberstadt's tutelage. Having already disseminated George Kennan's celebrated "Long Telegram" in 1946, he installed Kennan as deputy head

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of the National War College and commissioned his essay "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," later to be published under the signature "Mr. X" in *Foreign Affairs*. The telegram and then the article had an electrifying effect on Forrestal, and on Washington. In making a seemingly incontrovertible case for "containment," Kennan dashed any lingering hopes that the United States could reach an accommodation with Stalin, and he laid the basis for forty years of American resistance to Soviet expansionism when and wherever it might occur.

But Kennan's argument may not have been quite that simple. Forrestal and the foreign policy establishment seemed to overlook the passages in Kennan's article that alluded to the intrinsic weaknesses of Soviet ideology, and to the pervasive immiseration that was the inevitable outcome of the Stalinist command economy. Was Kennan understood as he understood himself? Mr. X's article admits to a variety of interpretations, a number of which have been offered by Mr. X himself. In his memoirs, Kennan writes that he re-read the essay twenty years later "with a horrified amusement"; it resembled "one of those primers put out by alarmed congressional committees or by the Daughters of the American Revolution, designed to arouse the citizenry to the dangers of the Communist conspiracy." He implies that Forrestal and others either misinterpreted or twisted the gravamen of his work to suit their purposes. This may be self-serving: Hoopes and Brinkley shrewdly observe that Kennan, in writing the article, had "yielded, subtly and subconsciously, to the stronger will and the greater official authority," namely to Forrestal. And Kennan himself observes that his failure to note that Russia would have the utmost difficulties in permanently subjugating Central and Eastern Europe may have "had something to do, I suspect, with what I felt to be Mr. Forrestal's needs at the time when I prepared the original paper for him."

Kennan exercised decisive influence on Forrestal in a lesser-known but equally fateful area as well. Writing to Forrestal in October 1947, he proposed the creation of what he called a "guerrilla warfare corps" trained by the American military, which could "fight fire with fire." Forrestal agreed, but he felt that such an effort should be established under the auspices of the CIA. On December 13, 1947, the NSC approved a program of covert propaganda under CIA direction. According to Hoopes and Brinkley, Forrestal "vigorously supported the program," which was a remote ancestor of Oliver North's "neat ideas." More than likely he approved the recruitment of Ukrainian Nazi collaborators for "Operation Nightingale." The guerrillas were trained in the United States and sent to certain deaths in the Ukraine.

Hoopes and Brinkley deal well with this discreditable episode, but they fail to broach the larger implications for Forrestal's approach to his official duties. They do not make even the attempt to view his espousal of containment and "active measures" (to use the old Soviet term) in light of the end of the cold war. Thus, they do not observe that Forrestal's instincts were sound. He was one of the first to recognize the Soviet threat, even if his zeal had a chiliastic edge. Nor do Hoopes and Brinkley point out that Forrestal's obstruction of service reform led to the paralysis of the armed services in Vietnam, where interservice rivalries resulted in duplication of efforts and the failure to develop a coherent strategy. This is all the more surprising in light of Hoopes's own earlier criticism of the war in his devastating book *The Limits of Intervention*, which appeared in 1968.

Hoopes and Brinkley prefer to interpret their biographical brief in the narrowest way, except about one matter: the American recognition of Israel in 1948. Apart from Clark Clifford and David Niles, Truman's advisers were uniformly opposed to extending recognition. George Marshall, Robert Lovett, Dean Rusk, Loy Henderson, George Kennan, and Forrestal all supported the State Department's adamant rejection of recognizing the Jewish state. Forrestal was the most emotionally opposed to recognition, and he fought grimly against it. Forrestal, who in the '30s had represented oil interests on the Street, argued that recognition would jeopardize a continued supply of Arab oil to the United States. It is now clear, if it was not so at the time, that Forrestal vastly overestimated the effects of Arab hostility. (His apprehensions anticipated the dire and false predictions of opponents of the Gulf war that the Arab world would rise en masse against the West should the United States attack Iraq.)

Forrestal's fears may not have been implausible in 1948. For Hoopes and Brinkley to embrace them now is a little astonishing. They uncritically depict Forrestal's efforts to torpedo Truman's initiative as enlightened and farsighted, and they impugn the loyalty of American Jews who urged Truman to recognize the new state. In their view, Forrestal's "dogged insistence that undeniable facts, as well as reason and proportion, should not be expunged from the debate made him the convenient whipping boy for nearly every shade of pro-Zionist opinion." And: "His

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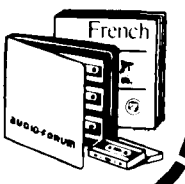

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innate patriotism led him to believe that American Jews would, or should, be U.S. citizens first and thus ready to recognize and support evident national interests." His patriotism!

Hoopes and Brinkley desire to discredit the entire Jewish cause. But by reviving, and rather brazenly, the old canard of dual loyalty, in a book that calls itself (and otherwise is) a responsible work of history, they discredit themselves. They distort Truman's motives, too, in charging that his support for the recognition of the Jewish state was principally bound up with winning the 1948 election and amounted to vulgar pandering to Jewish voters. As Dean Acheson, an opponent of recognition, recounted in *Present at the Creation*, Truman believed that the United States should honor the Balfour Declaration's promise that the Jews could re-establish a homeland in Palestine: "From many years of talk with him I know that this represented a deep conviction." Clifford has noted, moreover, that "neither the president nor I believed that Palestine was the key to the Jewish vote," given the divisions within the Zionist community on recognition; the key was, rather, "a continued commitment to liberal political and economic policies."

Hoopes and Brinkley certainly seem immune to humanitarian concerns. Quoting with apparent approval Thomas Dewey's bigoted remark that Palestine had become an "emotional symbol" because of "the intemperate attitude of the Jewish people," they go on to assert that Forrestal had been "completely rebuffed in his earnest efforts to put aside political passions"—as though there were no passion on the part of those opposing Jewish desires. "The United States," we are informed, "has paid, and continues to pay, an extremely high political price for its indulgent support of that nation." Indulgent? This is not an argument, it is a prejudice. Had the United States refused to recognize Israel, they conclude, it would have been in a position to "promote the economic development of the region as a whole"—as though the United States had any such obligation or the oil-rich countries couldn't employ their own revenues for that purpose.

Did factors other than oil inspire Forrestal's resistance? Hoopes and Brinkley flatly deny, as does Dorwart, that he was "in any sense motivated by anti-Semitism." Perhaps. But Rogow, Forrestal's shrewd earlier biographer, observed that "while Forrestal was not an anti-Semite, his attitude toward Jews was characterized by much ambivalence." Rogow remarked on Forrestal's utter indifference to the plight of survivors of the German death camps. (He opposed allowing them to immigrate to the United States and wanted them to be resettled in Latin America.) Nor was Forrestal prepared to accept Jews as social equals. Rogow quotes a Wall Street colleague who remembered that Forrestal

> thought Jews were "different" and he could never really understand how a non-Jew and a Jew could be friends.... He himself was very reserved with people who were Jews. I think there was something about them he couldn't understand, or maybe didn't like.

Surely these attitudes, so at variance with Truman's liberal instincts, should at least have been mentioned. Hoopes and Brinkley appear most exercised, instead, by the deleterious effects of the Palestine controversy on Forrestal's mental health.

If the Palestine controversy further unnerved Forrestal, his final battle, the one over the 1950 fiscal year defense budget, caused his emotional clutch to slip completely. Whether or not Forrestal was "impelled by some penchant for dark tragedy in his Irish soul," as Hoopes and Brinkley mystically divine, Truman's refusal to countenance a defense budget exceeding $14.4 billion and the opposition of the admirals and the Air Force to his spending limits drove Forrestal to distraction. Truman and Marshall had sagely concluded that rather than spend exclusively on the armed forces, it was essential to direct monies to the reconstruction of Western Europe. Incapable of reining in the rebellious admirals and of presenting the president with a defense budget within the proscribed limits, Forrestal would sit with his head on his desk, weeping.

Truman grew so exasperated with Forrestal's repeated phone calls for advice that he concluded that Forrestal could no longer reach decisions. Clifford reports in his recent memoirs that during a late Cabinet meeting in 1948, "I noticed that he had scratched raw a spot on the top of his head with a fingernail. As the meeting progressed, he continued to scratch it until it was the size of a half-dollar. I watched in silent horror as blood slowly oozed from the spot." And gutter journalists like Drew Pearson smelled blood. Visiting an old innuendo on the unstable Forrestal, Pearson reported as fact the fiction that in 1937 Forrestal had fled the room in which his wife was being robbed of her jewels and was subsequently seen cowering in the back yard.

These pressures weakened Forrestal's already tenuous hold on reality. His aberrations could no longer be ignored. Truman decided that Forrestal had to go, though he left him hanging for several months before demanding his resignation on March 1, 1949. With only a shadow existence apart from his official duties, Forrestal would not leave on his own. Truman, in order to pay off a campaign debt, named the bilious and cantankerous Louis Johnson to succeed him on March 28. General Omar Bradley remarked that "Truman's replaced one mental case with another."

Forrestal's illusion of self-reliance crumbled completely once he tendered his resignation. The routines of the office had acted as a harness, sustaining this dead soul as the semblance of a living, functioning being. When a worried Eberstadt visited Forrestal after his resignation, the former defense secretary gestured and muttered that "they" were out to "get" him. Taken off to Hobe Sound, Florida, where friends foiled one suicide attempt, Forrestal, walking on the beach, pointed to metal sockets fixed in the sand to hold umbrellas and mumbled, "We had better not discuss anything here. These things are wired, and everything we say is being recorded." In a kind of eerie foreshadowing of McCarthyism, of the paranoia that gripped the American right during the 1950s, Forrestal believed that the Jews and the Communists were "after" him.

A series of bizarre coincidences led to the suicide itself. In order to forestall further attacks by Pearson and Walter Winchell, the Truman administration insisted that Forrestal be confined on the sixteenth floor of the Naval Hospital, where the nature of his illness could be concealed, rather than allowing him to be treated at the Menninger Clinic in Minnesota, which was properly equipped to treat psychiatric disorders. On the fateful evening, a young doctor unfamiliar with Forrestal's condition was on call, and so Forrestal gained access to the pantry unobserved, where he made for a window without a protective screen. Death was instant. On the desk beside his bed lay an anthology, open to the page

An Economic Proposal

As we did with Grant (to cite a precedent),
We ought to put George Bush on legal tender
And finally profit by our President,
To light our public lamps with regal tinder.

There'd be new interest in the Capitol,
As he would circulate among the many
And pay our debts and stake our capital.
But he is spent, and we've run out of money.

GREG WILLIAMSON

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that contained verses from Sophocles' *Ajax*, the Greek warrior who took his life after enduring unbearable disgrace.

Thus Forrestal's life came to its explosive end. Hoopes and Brinkley are justified in depicting Forrestal as "a rare public servant—a meld of high ability, deep dedication, and selfless labor." They conclude that his "tragedy was that his standards were higher and nobler than contemporary circumstances could sustain, and he was thus consumed by his quest for a transcendent ideal." What that ideal was, they do not say. The world had welcomed him. He had spurned the glittering attractions of the sporting life and had abandoned the high-wire financial schemes of Wall Street, after reveling in each. He sacrificed wealth and pleasure for public service. But the habits of his earlier career followed him into the corridors of power, in that his judgments remained derivative and shallow. His skeptical detachment and elegant aloofness did not serve him in good stead. In his pursuit of the ideal, he was only a society man in over his head.

It strains credulity when Hoopes and Brinkley contend that Forrestal's downfall was due to "standards higher than circumstances could sustain." After all, the standards of George Marshall, Dean Acheson, and Harry Truman were hardly inferior, and the circumstances with which they contended were no less tortuous. Forrestal's "circumstances" were, in truth, the contradictions of his own nature. His political mind was fatally flawed; he was a Creon, not an Ajax. Though his descent into madness may well have been more a personal tragedy than a public one, the emotional constrictions and the intellectual limitations of Forrestal not only devastated him as a person, they rendered the public work of his final years nugatory. Unlike Castlereagh, he had little to show for the sacrifice of his humanity.

JACOB HEILBRUNN is University Fellow at the Center for German and European Studies at Georgetown University.

Heard on the Street

BY LUC SANTE

Up in the Old Hotel by Joseph Mitchell

(Pantheon, 718 pp., $27.50)

The title of this omnibus edition of Joseph Mitchell's books (four out of five of them) was an apt choice: it is both mysterious and deceptively cozy, and the 1952 piece from which it derives epitomizes a great deal about Mitchell's work. It opens with a sentence that is, again, ominous and deceptively reassuring: "Every now and then, seeking to rid my mind of thoughts of death and doom, I get up early and go down to Fulton Fish Market." Mitchell briefly evokes the sights, sounds, and smells of the place, then heads across the street for breakfast at Sloppy Louie's (still there, and still serving excellent fish, though rather gentrified nowadays). He spots the proprietor, Louis Morino, and listens to him talk.

Like all the people Mitchell listens to, Morino is voluble, plain-spoken, sensuously articulate, so much so that you might suspect Mitchell's editorial hand, here as elsewhere, of turning raggedy ordinary speech into great prose—but never mind. Louie is from an Italian fishing village called Recco, and when he gets into why he bought this particular restaurant in 1930, when he had money saved up and the Depression had caused innumerable restaurants all over town to become available for bargain prices, he compares the fish market to his birthplace:

> . . . they're very much alike—the fish smell, the general gone-to-pot look, the trading that goes on in the streets, the roofs over the sidewalks, the cats in corners gnawing on fish heads, the gulls in the gutters, the way everybody's on to everybody else, the quarrelling and the arguing. There's a boss fishmonger down here, a spry old hardheaded Italian man who's got a million dollars in the bank and dresses as if he's on relief and walks up and down the fish pier snatching fish out of barrels by their heads or their tails and weighing them in his hands and figuring out in his mind to a fraction of a fraction how much they're worth and shouting and singing and enjoying life, and the face on him, the way he conducts himself, he reminds me so much of my father that sometimes, when I see him, it puts me in a good humor, and sometimes it breaks my heart.

In between listening to Louie and filling in the rest of his story, Mitchell eats. By and by Louie gets around to the subject of expansion. He's been wanting to put tables on the second floor, but he's had to use it for storage, since waterfront houses don't have cellars. So, then, what about the floors above?

> "You mean those boarded-up floors," Louie said. He hesitated a moment.
> "Didn't I ever tell you about the upstairs in here?" he asked. "Didn't I ever tell you about those boarded-up floors?"

It is a fitting hook for a ghost story. Louie tells about the times he almost went up in the old hand-powered pulley elevator, and how he lost his nerve, and then he tells about how, now and then and in dribs and drabs and for reasons of curiosity and labyrinthine association, he researched the history of the building, and while he tells this he is interrupted by fishmongers going in and out and looking for other market workers. Finally Mitchell talks him into making the trip. The two of them proceed, wearing construction helmets and brandishing flashlights.

They yank their way up and find themselves in the old reading room of what had been the Fulton Ferry Hotel. "There was a thick, black mat of fleecy dust on the floor—dust and soot and grit and lint and slut's wool." In the rooms they find old iron bedsteads, broken crockery, mirror-topped bureaus, scattered playing cards, empty whiskey bottles, an old photograph, a sign saying "The Wages of Sin is Death." Mitchell is just getting started and wants to go on to the upper floors, but Louie hightails it for the elevator. "'Come on, pull the rope faster! Pull it faster! Let's get out of this.'"

Nearly all of Mitchell's hallmarks are present: a leading character with a good story to tell; the vernacular at its richest; the presence of plain but great food, seafood in particular; the bustle of people skilled at their trade; the spoor of the past, both the past that is irrevocably gone and the past that lives on, at least temporarily, in memories and places and crafts and traditions. Mitchell's pacing is deliberate. His prose appears simple, but it's about as simple as a suspension bridge, and anyway, as a character in another story says of fish cooks, "It takes almost a lifetime to learn how to do a thing simply."

There is his ability to convey masses of learning and lore offhandedly, by a kind of osmosis, while the reader's attention is diverted. There is his control of narrative dynamics, which allows him to balance a casual, almost conversational tone across dramatic ellipses through to clipped endings. And there is his humor, which is not always immediately apparent but is always there, lurking behind even, maybe especially, his grimmest and most melancholy

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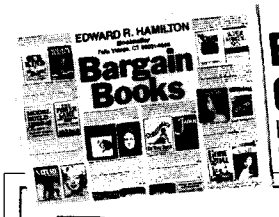

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passages—"graveyard humor," he calls it in a prefatory note, citing *Finnegans Wake* and the engravings of Posada, initially surprising choices that make increasing sense in the light of his work's course.

I first heard of Joseph Mitchell about six years ago, when I bought a battered paperback copy of his second book, *McSorley's Wonderful Saloon* (1943), from a peddler on Astor Place in Manhattan. I was getting interested in the history of the neighborhood, and from the cover design, featuring a beefy, bowtied, and mustachioed bartender, I expected a compilation of jocular and faded anecdotes about the venerable (1854) alehouse around the corner from my point of purchase. I was familiar with that sort of mildewed literature of nostalgia and had developed a perverse liking for it.

Here, though, I found something quite different. In the book's second piece, "Mazie," a profile of a Bowery moviehouse ticket-taker, for example, there is a vignette of a poetically inclined bum called "Eddie Guest":

> At the Venice one night he saw "The River," the moving picture in which the names of the tributaries of the Mississippi were made into a poem. When he came out, he stopped at Mazie's cage, spread his arms, and recited the names of many of the walk-up hotels on the Bowery. "The Alabama Hotel, the Comet, and the Uncle Sam House," he said, in a declamatory voice, "the Dandy, the Defender, the Niagara, the Owl, the Victoria House and the Grand Windsor Hotel, the Houston, the Mascot, the Palace, the Progress, the Palma House and the White House Hotel, the Newport, the Crystal, the Lion, and the Marathon. All flophouses. All on the Bowery. Each and all my home, sweet home."

Surprise followed surprise in these profiles of fantastic, improbable, but undeniably real characters, and the whole shed new light on the street-level history of New York City. The writing was pure poetry, nothing purple about it, only the patient, accumulative poetry of names and the way people talk: not unlike "Eddie Guest," Mitchell composes rhapsodic lists of names, of shellfish and wildflowers and harbor traffic and Gypsy clans and traveling circuses and over-the-hill boxers. I set about finding his four other books, *My Ears are Bent* (1938), *Old Mr. Flood* (1948), *The Bottom of the Harbor* (1959), and *Joe Gould's Secret* (1965).

Since the last named was his last published work, I assumed Mitchell was dead, until a stray item in the *Times* one day—an account of an expedition by preservation experts into the sealed City Hall subway station, the most beautiful in the system—noted his presence and quoted him. Although I knew how unfortunately easy it is for even the greatest writers to tumble into obscurity, even in their own lifetimes—look at Melville—I was nevertheless astonished that a living writer of such stature could be out of print and unknown to most people of my generation. Eventually I learned that he had long been at work on a memoir, or a book about markets (or maybe there were two books; accounts varied), and that he had been partly responsible for his earlier books remaining out of print, for reasons I did not know but could imagine, including pride, sadness, and obstinacy.

The publication of *Up in the Old Hotel* rights at least part of this wrong. It reprints the last four of Mitchell's books, as well as a number of previously uncollected pieces. All of its contents were first published in *The New Yorker*. Mitchell was born in 1908 on a tobacco farm in eastern North Carolina and came to New York to work as a reporter in 1929, arriving the day after the stock market crashed. After stints at the *World*, the *Herald-Tribune*, and the *World-Telegram*, he joined *The New Yorker* in 1938, and has had a cubicle there ever since.

The New Yorker in the Depression years loosened its focus from the smart set that had preoccupied it in the '20s and adopted a more democratic vista, and Mitchell was one of a surge of experienced street reporters who realized this change. Another was A.J. Liebling, Mitchell's closest friend until Liebling's death in 1963. Both collected raffish characters, hung out with them, recorded their frequently inspired talk. They were fascinated by carnies and con artists and locality mayors, and they seldom failed to take notice of the food on hand. The two friends reflected the influence of such early nineteenth-century English journalists as George Borrow and William Cobbett, who wrote apparently effortless prose that flaunted its plainness through the avoidance of Latinate abstractions and the use of great chains of simple conjunctions in preference to complex clause structures. And their hearts were indisputably in their material: they were not slumming. The original edition of the McSorley book begins with a note:

> The people in a number of the stories are of the kind that many writers have recently got in the habit of referring to as "the little people." I regard this phrase as patronizing and repulsive. There are no little people in this book. They are as big as you are, whoever you are.

As their careers progressed, the differences between them became more visible. It was not just that Liebling, the native New Yorker, roamed far and wide in his choice of subjects, while the Southerner Mitchell wrote almost exclusively

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about the city and its near neighbors. Liebling was a gregarious bon vivant, by all accounts as much of a character as those he wrote about, and even when beset by depression himself or when writing about death and loss, as in his war pieces, he still manages to convey tremendous gusto and boisterous humor. Mitchell, on the other hand, remains conscious of the scythe and the clock even at his most ostensibly carefree. His work is haunted. Not only are his subjects a[illegible]d more often than not, but mortality also shadows the traditions that they represent. *Up in the Old Hotel* has a necrological aspect. It is a record of the last days of beefsteak dinners and shad netting and a hundred specialized harbor trades and varieties of practical lore, as well as of kinds of individuality and of community that have been erased by technology and its social consequences.

That Mitchell was aware from the beginning of the moribund nature of the matters he celebrated can be seen, for example, in "Obituary of a Gin Mill," from 1939. A saloonkeeper has closed up his old joint and moved to a new spot up the street, a place "so stylish that [the owner] did not, for good luck, frame the first dollar bill passed across the bar; he framed the first five-dollar bill." The old place was rude, anarchic, and comfortable. People sang and yelled and fought and played practical jokes. The "old place was dirty and it smelled like a zoo, but it was genuine; his new place is as shiny and undistinguished as a two-dollar alarm clock." Much of life has suffered the fate that a character in another story ascribes to vegetables, which "have been improved until they're downright poisonous."

But nobody should get the idea that Mitchell is pulling a long face while relating these matters. His stories about old Mr. Flood (which he classifies as fiction; their main character is apparently a composite) are as much about obstinate survival as they are about ruinous change. Mr. Flood is well into his 90s and is determined to see the age of 115 by living near the fish market and consuming almost exclusively seafood. He is in sound health, hasn't had a cold since 1912:

> Only reason I caught that one, I went on a toot and it was a pouring-down rainy night in the dead of winter and my shoes were cracked and they let the damp in and I lost my balance a time or two and I sloshed around in the gutter and somewhere along the line I mislaid my hat and I'd just had a haircut and I stood in a draft in one saloon an hour or more and there was a poor fellow next to me sneezing his head off and when I got home I crawled into a bed that was beside an open window like a fool and passed out with my wet clothes on, shoes and all. Also, I'd spent the night before sitting up on a train and hadn't slept a wink and my resistance was low.

In contrast to Mr. Flood there is his friend Matthew T. Cusack, an old retired cop who once possessed a boundless appetite for food and drink and life, until he was given a radio as a present. He started listening to health shows, whereupon he began exhibiting symptoms, and now he grimly awaits death. Mitchell, of course, is not editorializing against radios or public health or anything else so much as he is arguing for self-sufficiency and graveyard humor, as well as reminding his readers that every improvement in life, every gain, brings with it a corresponding loss. He can mourn the passing of the old ways, but elsewhere, as when he writes of the attempts to control the rat population around the harbor, he can show a dozen reasons why it is a good thing some of those old ways have passed. Civilization is often a bad bargain, and Mitchell documents again and again how progress is far from being a straightforward matter.

The book is densely populated by individualists, obsessives, strays, loners, freaks, operators, and keepers of various flames. Some of their voices, for example those of Jane Barnell, the bearded lady, or the Rev. Mr. James Jefferson "Daddy" Hall, the street preacher, are so compelling that it is difficult to keep from quoting them at length and nearly impossible to keep from reading them aloud. Of them all, the one who looms largest is Joe Gould, the New York bohemian eccentric otherwise known as Professor Sea Gull. Mitchell wrote a profile of him in 1942 but could not shake him, actually or figuratively, and finally reconsidered his case in a series of pieces published in 1964.

Gould was well known among the artistic and literary crowds and among people who went to bars in lower Manhattan from the '20s to the late '40s. He was a sponger, a soak, and a general nuisance, but he was also wildly imaginative. He owed his nickname to the seagull imitations he would launch into in bars, in part as a way of soliciting funds, and he claimed a special affinity with the birds, and to have mastered their language to the point of translating Longfellow into it. He was a member of the Harvard class of 1911. After graduation he joined an anthropological expedition, in which his duties consisted of measuring the heads of some 1,500 Chippewa and Mandan Indians in North Dakota. After that he moved to New York City, worked for about a year as a police reporter, and then embarked on an Oral History of Mankind, which prevented him from doing any other kind of work for the rest of his life.

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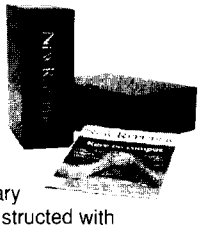

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Excerpts from this project appeared in such literary journals as *Broom*, *Pagany*, and *The Dial*. For decades the work was legendary, and Gould gave varying estimates of its length, well into the millions of words. In the first profile, Mitchell summarized and quoted Gould's descriptions of some of its contents, which appeared to be fearsomely discursive, lodging chapters of complaint and reminiscence and speculation among verbatim transcriptions of innumerable life stories related to him by all kinds of people in speakeasies and cafeterias, on subway trains and park benches.

Gould was intermittently supported by a great many people, in large part on the strength of his project, which was widely believed on Gould's own word to be a masterpiece and an essential reference for generations of future scholars. Mitchell attempted at various times over the years to track down the bulk of the manuscripts, but Gould gave conflicting and elusive accounts of their whereabouts. Mitchell would hear of one Greenwich Village resident or another who was safeguarding a stack of notebooks, but whenever he actually located such a pile, their contents would inevitably consist of four or five complaining or reminiscent chapters copied again and again, with few variations.

Finally, after years of this, Mitchell guessed the truth: Gould's masterwork existed only in his head. When pressed, Gould didn't deny it, and Mitchell kept the secret until seven years after Gould's death. Telling this tale clearly caused Mitchell a great deal of discomfort. He summons up the ghost of his own unwritten youthful novel; he equivocates, citing the flood of unread books in the world and the probable commercial fate of the Oral History; he proposes that Gould had "created a character a good deal more complicated than most of the characters created by the novelists and playwrights of his time." What he doesn't mention is that he, Mitchell, came about as close as anybody has to fulfilling such a work, not a million words long (more's the pity), and not exactly "a great hodgepodge and kitchen midden of hearsay, a repository of jabber, an omnium-gatherum of bushwa, gab, palaver, hogwash, flapdoodle, and malarkey," but a shaped, seasoned, simmered, distilled account of a raft of people's stories that would otherwise have gone unrecorded. He made Gould himself live on, in a way that those excerpts in *Broom* and *The Dial* never would.

One reason for Mitchell's relative obscurity over the past few decades may be that he is uncommonly self-effacing in his work, even by the generally self-effacing standard of the classic *New Yorker* reporters, and this somehow manages to seem the case even when he is bringing himself into a story. In the author's note at the back of the volume, he gives a one-paragraph autobiography, supplies a list of his ongoing enthusiasms, and briefly describes his visits back to the North Carolina countryside, where once

> he watched for an hour or so as a pileated woodpecker tore the bark off the upper trunk and limbs of a tall old dead black-gum tree, and he says he considers this the most spectacular event he has ever witnessed.

Joseph Mitchell's work is clear and strong and rich, and it also possesses a quality too seldom found in most writing of any sort: it is unreservedly generous.

LUC SANTE is the author of *Low Life: Lures and Snares of Old New York*. His new book, *Evidence*, will be published in November by Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

Dressed for Success

BY ANTHONY GRAFTON

The Art of Worldly Wisdom: A Pocket Oracle by Baltasar Gracián translated by Christopher Maurer

(Doubleday, 182 pp., $15)

In the 1920s, when my father attended Philadelphia Central High School and the University of Pennsylvania, he could buy classic texts in quantity even though his father, a hatter, was far from rich. The elegant little volumes of the World's Classics from Oxford University Press, the crudely printed Little Blue Books of Emanuel Haldeman-Julius, and the crisp products of Everyman's Library were all within the means of a scholarship boy from an immigrant family. Like the remarkable public librarians and schoolteachers of the time, these publishers wanted to democratize culture. Rigorous teaching opened the doors; but cheap, sturdy, well-printed editions of essays and biographies, histories and novels could furnish a mind. They enabled the ambitious poor to appropriate a whole world of thought and experience that had once been the private property of an Anglo-Saxon elite.

This new edition of Baltasar Gracián's *The Art of Worldly Wisdom* reminded me at first of my father's collection of classics. Like them, it offers the complete text of a "great book"—a manual on success by a bitter, brilliant seventeenth-century Spanish Jesuit—in a translation by a competent modern scholar. Like them, it is presented in a small, elegant format and distinctive type, with only a few words on each page, and a dust jacket on which a twisting vine encircles the title in the best late Renaissance fashion. Like them, finally, it assumes the relevance of an old text to the modern world.

Doubleday's jacket copy assures the reader that

> throughout the centuries, mankind has produced three great, timeless wisdom books: Machiavelli's *The Prince*, Sun-Tzu's *The Art of War*, and Baltasar Gracián's *The Art of Worldly Wisdom: A Pocket Oracle*. . . . Gracián's work draws on careful study of statesmen and potentates who managed to combine ethical behavior with worldly effectiveness. Each of the elegantly crafted maxims in this volume offers valuable insight on the art of living and the practice of achieving.

Nothing in this sales pitch is new, except the reference to Sun-Tzu. My father's old, small-format copy of an earlier translation of Gracián, published by Macmillan in 1950, presents the text as "the original and classic advice for making friends and influencing people. Through the changing centuries, nothing in the nature of man has altered to lessen the pertinence of these scraps of worldly wisdom."

At first I was delighted to see a major publisher commit itself to what seemed the refreshingly old-fashioned enterprise of urging people to read a classic text on morality and prudence—and all the more delighted to learn that the book had appeared with a burst of publicity, sold some 100,000 copies, and made a place for itself in bookshops that do not usually stock texts by Jesuit philosophers of the Baroque era. A book with blurbs by Friedrich Nietzsche and Arthur Schopenhauer on the best-seller list of *The New York Times*.

So much for songs of innocence. A fairly perfunctory investigation showed

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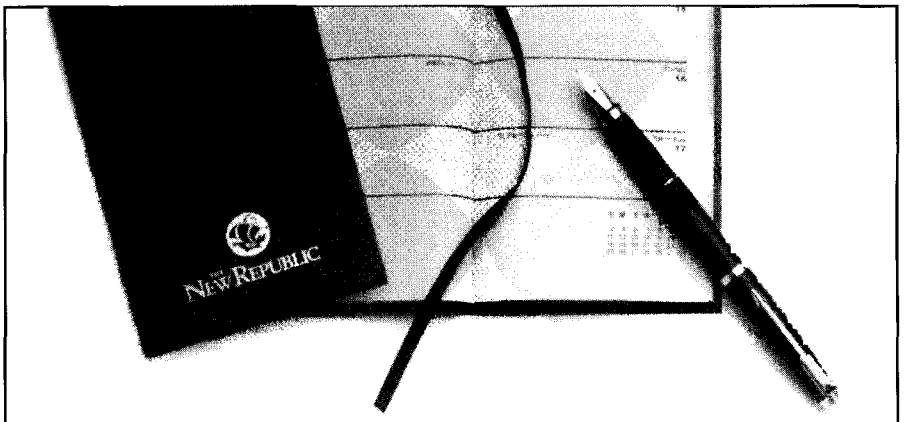
me that my optimism was misplaced. Both the appearance and the fate of this edition of Gracián reveal a good deal about the world of the book in modern America, and most of the tidings are not good. For a start, the whole idea of publishing a bare text of this book, simple and stripped of commentary, is troublesome. Gracián's text is short, and he casts his individual tenets in punchy little maxims, some of which don't stand in need of glossing: "*Reach perfection.* No one is born th way"; "*Don't outshine your boss.* Being defeated is hateful, and besting one's boss is either foolish or fatal"; "*When you start something, don't raise other people's expectations.* What is highly praised seldom measures up to expectation"; "*Don't let your sympathy with the unfortunate make you one of them.*"

Bromides all of them, but sensible enough, and sometimes wise. Some of them are even catchy. No wonder, it seems, that the book became immensely popular in the seventeenth century, providing courtiers not only in Spain but also in France and Italy with practical guidance and a model of apparently effortless wit. Who would not want a manual on how to rise at court without seeming to try?

In fact, however, neither the text nor its story is so clear. Like many seventeenth-century Jesuits, Gracián saw the literature of Greece and Rome as the prime source of all wisdom about this (as opposed to the next) world. He buried himself in antiquity, spending long hours at Zaragoza in the library of his patron Vicencio Juan de Lastanosa. In that wonderful collection he steeped himself in heavy folios and quartos, fondled thousands of ancient coins and medals, admired paintings and sculptures. And once Gracián had explored every account in this vast S&L of traditional learning, he set out to show that it was still solvent: that ancient history and ancient morality could provide guidance through the mazes and the echo chambers of court politics in the age of absolutism.

Even in the seventeenth century, however, this enterprise was not easy. In the first place, knowledge about both the ancient world and the modern world had grown exponentially during the previous l[illegible] years and more. Scholars now realized that the ancients had disagreed about everything from the nature of the good life to the meaning of history. While writing *The Prince* early in the sixteenth century, Machiavelli thought it obvious that one obtained important information about politics and history by reading. In a famous letter, he described the process as a kind of elevated, direct conversation: the earnest reader could enter the courts of the ancients, ask them questions and



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receive direct answers about their decisions and motives. But only a century later Descartes described reading as an enjoyable pastime and nothing more. It could show only that opinions differed about every imaginable subject—an intellectual reality that one could discover as easily by travel in the modern world as by reading about the ancient one, and certainly no firm basis for progress in philosophy.

The humanist who wanted to use the lessons of the ancients without revealing himself as simpleminded had to do so in a particular way. He could not merely quote them ad nauseam. Elegant allusion must connect him and his imagined reader in a conspiracy of expert knowledge. The passing reference to a myth or an event, the elegantly turned half-quotation from a poet or a moralist, became the family jokes, incomprehensible to outsiders, that made up the common culture of the citizens of the Republic of Letters. Above all, it was incumbent upon the scholar to put a twist on his traditional material, setting familiar phrases in a fresh context or extracting a new sense from a well-known example. Only by using the classics in this artful way did Gracián and other moralists of his time update their enterprise and keep it alive in the mid-seventeenth-century courts, where shares in wit were quoted at a far higher rate than shares in learning.

The Art of Worldly Wisdom swarms with allusions and quotations of this kind—so many that even a seventeenth-century or eighteenth-century reader needed help in identifying and deciphering them. Later editions of the work festooned each paragraph in commentary, which revealed hidden sources and made plain the nature of Gracián's Alexandrian subtlety. Christopher Maurer, the translator of this text, identifies some of the obscure myths and persons. He wittily avoids other problems by updating Gracián's phrasing (for example, he nicely renders a reference to efforts to identify people suspected of having "impure" blood as a reference to blacklisting). For the most part, however, the reader wanders the mazes of Gracián's unfamiliar mental world without guidance.

Even worse, Gracián seldom makes his points straightforwardly. From Machiavelli on, those who tried to teach prudence in the Renaissance found themselves forced to teach by irony and ambiguity. The basic reason was simple. The teacher of prudence hoped to show his reader how to take advantage of the folly of most men. Ordinary people work by hearsay, not by fact. They judge important individuals by reputation, not by deeds; and they do not know how to accommodate their behavior to the situation, to trim their sails to the ever changing weather of high politics and warfare. Gracián and his ilk tried to show the courtier, their intended reader, how to read his inferiors and manipulate them and how to impress his superiors and work through them. But to make this message too simple would blunt its point, by making it accessible to everyone and changing the very conditions that the reader hoped to exploit.

Gracián and other Jesuits faced another problem, too. They were believing Christians, but they owed their prominence in society to the same ability that won them the hatred of Pascal, that is, to their brilliance at adjusting their moral advice to make it pragmatically sound. They became masters of casuistry, the art of accommodating moral law to concrete needs: the situational ethics of the day. A particularly famous case was that of a Jesuit of the late sixteenth century who denied to the authorities in England that he had seen a co-conspirator and then, under torture, admitted that he had seen the very same man. He had no problem explaining the ethics of his apparent lie: the first time he meant that he had never seen the other man *in visione beatifica*, "in the beatific vision."

The moralist who taught practices like these had to spin rather a sinuous thread of argument. He had to acknowledge—as Gracián does here, in his last maxim—that a holy life was the highest of all aspirations: "In a word, be a saint. That says everything." But he also had to train his readers to swim in shark-filled waters, where saints are few. The result, as Maurer points out in his brief but insightful introduction, is that Gracián's text is often deliberately paradoxical and devious. Arguments are constructed not by syllogism or other strict forms of inference, but by agglomeration and indirection, as one clause follows another and modifies it by proximity.

Even Gracián's syntax tortured his contemporary readers. And his advice as a whole repeatedly slips into what seems a basic paradox: genuine virtue lies in the sort of refined speech and crafty action that only a few will appreciate, but effective conduct depends on the sort of speech and action that will fool the many. The saintly courtier had to be an effective dissembler—a piece of advice that has shocked many readers from Gracián's day to ours. As Gracián himself puts it: "*Don't express your ideas too clearly.* Most people think little of what they understand, and venerate what they do not. To be valued, things must be difficult: if they can't understand you, people will think more highly of you. To win respect, make yourself seem wiser and more prudent than is required by the person you are dealing with." Many a presidential press spokesperson would no doubt agree.

Gracián's qualities make his book challenging even to professional scholars—who disagreed fiercely, long before the full fury of deconstruction, about what lessons, if any, this ambitious and ambiguous book meant to teach. Some have condemned him for preaching hypocrisy; some have defended him, arguing that he remained at all times within the traditional bounds of Catholic moral thought; some, like Maurer, have acknowledged that Gracián's work has many "ellipses and zigzags" but savor these as a profound reflection of the chaos of real life. Students will find it useful to have Maurer's intelligent rendering, which can help them work with the original. But the nature of the text and the austerity of its presentation make it unlikely that a wide audience will get much out of it. And yet this book has found a startlingly large audience in America. For that reason it raises interesting questions: not only about Gracián and the seventeenth century, but also about Americans and their reading in the twentieth century.

Here we have a difficult, obscure book by a difficult, little-known author. Why on earth would Doubleday publish it? And why on earth did it sell so many copies? What's going on? One hypothesis is easy to eliminate: that someone at Doubleday actually read the text knowledgeably, from cover to cover, thought hard about its relevance to a modern American public, and brought it out. The jacket copy claims that the text has not been available before. In fact, as Maurer himself points out, no fewer than seven English translations already exist, the most recent in 1967. It also claims (I'm not kidding) that the text is immediately relevant to modern America because it was written in seventeenth-century Spain: "Newly translated, Gracián's advice is as astonishingly appropriate today as it was in seventeenth-century Spain, a society resembling our own in its contiguous splendor and abject misery." Let's pause over that one: they had El Greco, we have Julian Schnabel; they had Olivares, we have James Baker; they had the revolt of the Catalans, we have "not in my backyard"; they had *limpieza de sangre* and the Inquisition, we have political correctness and Jesse Helms. Perhaps somebody at Doubleday reflected, in the manner of Paul Kennedy, that advice for the ambitious courtiers of a creaky empire, slowly crumbling as its economy decayed, might be relevant to ambitious Americans today. As the carcasses become harder to find, the jackals need keener noses and

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sharper claws. But this interpretation seems much too charitable.

In fact, the easy, meaningless analogy on the flap is a dead giveaway about the placement of this book in the current literary market. Since the 1920s, as Joan Shelley Rubin has shown in *The Making of Middlebrow Culture*, many American publishers have sponsored certain forms of high vulgarization that were amenable to the hard sell. In the 1920s and 1930s, for example, short summaries of history and philosophy—H. G. Wells's *Outline*, Will Durant's *The Story of Philosophy*—lent themselves to powerful marketing campaigns. They were informative, meaty, accessible; they provided the uneducated or semi-educated reader with basic information, the lack of which could brand him or her as uncultured; and they supposedly shed light directly onto modern problems and crises, since nothing basic had ever changed in society, culture, or human nature. Simon and Schuster brilliantly promoted Durant's *The Story of Greece* as apposite for Americans living in the reign of Roosevelt. After all, it portrayed Cretan women as being as slender as modern Americans and told the story of the Athenian legislator Solon, whose work differed only in "minor" ways from that of the modern Solon in the nation's capital.

Doubleday's Gracián is a modernized version of the same enterprise. It offers direct access to a past supposedly packaged for American consumption, simple, unchallenging, and useful. Still, it differs from the vulgarizations of the '20s in one crucial way. It fits into a different niche in the violently bloody ecology of our book market. The works of Durant and Van Loon, as Rubin points out, were only the vulgar end of a genuine, massive effort to democratize segments of high culture. Even Max Schuster had high ambitions for his publishing house. Some rival enterprises, like Bennett Cerf's Modern Library, applied the democratic hard sell to a more consistently high-minded list of titles, bringing the Russian novel and European modernism to a wide public.

Nowadays a few of these purist enterprises still exist. Anyone must be grateful for the Library of America, for Dover's Thrift Editions, for the recent revival by Knopf of the Everyman's Library. But these ventures are chiefly historical in content and pedagogical in intent. Doubleday's Gracián doesn't form part of such a project, even in the indirect way that Durant belonged to the same agenda as the Modern Library. Consider the book's appearance. Its floral jacket reminds one of fashionable English soap. And the resemblance isn't a matter of chance: if you hunt the book up in the bookstore, you discover that it is presented not exactly as a historical text. Its rivals—the other books in similar formats—are not primary sources newly translated, but anecdotes and homilies about effective strategies for business or for life: *Words on Women*, *Meditations for Women Who Do Too Much*, *Friendship: A Bouquet of Quotes*. Inside these volumes one finds fragments of text carved from diverse sources. Often the texts are very short, but they are always elegantly printed and sometimes adorned with splendid graphics.

These, in sum, are non-books for non-readers: books that claim to offer useful messages without demanding effort. Gracián's book has found a new life not as a classic, but as a commodity of another well-defined sort. The clue is in the subtitle: "A Pocket Oracle." Though the words are Gracián's, they take on a new sense in the American context. For Americans have been going to the bookstore for pocket oracles for a very long time. *The Art of Worldly Wisdom*, in short, is a self-help book.

As Richard Hofstadter showed long ago, the self-help books of America teach a simple message, a simple "spiritual technology." Master a few lessons and you will transform yourself. You will stop thinking in useless abstractions like good and evil. Your character will become hard and massive, moving irresistibly through the currents of ordinary, undirected people. And thereby you will gain power, not only over your self but over your world. This distilled (and distorted) quintessence of the old Puritan literature of Baxter and Franklin speaks to the hearts of millions of Americans in flight from complexity.

Not that this phenomenon is entirely limited to the United States. The rest of the West comes to resemble us more and more in lots of ways. This year's surprise best seller in Italy was a (much misinterpreted) thirty-two-page translation of Epicurus on happiness, which followed hard on the heels of *Seneca for Managers*. Still, it is in America that clever publishers have been able to make a remarkably cosmopolitan range of prophets—from Christ to Confucius—preach this same gospel, by erasing or eliding historical and philosophical differences and reductively packaging their wares in the language of Babbitt and in the physical form of the *Rules of the Road*. The unexpected and sinuous and difficult Spanish Jesuit now made available in handy pocket form is only the most recent voice in the multicultural (and completely homogenizing) choir.

Like all these books, the new Gracián seems destined less to be read and criticized than to be given as a nice, wise little gift—and perhaps now and then to provide a quote to be snatched out of context by an after-dinner speaker with limited resources of his or her own. The immigrant boys and girls of this generation, certainly, will have to look hard and pay high if they want to furnish their rooms and minds with real books. For the thousands of copies of Gracián sold do not reveal a rush of historicism to the American head, but only the perennial appeal to Americans of self-improving uplift—and, of course, the sharp but short-lived power of hype, of the overexcited and uninformed chat that sells everything from clothes to cars to, well, books. United Thinkers of Benetton, rejoice.

ANTHONY GRAFTON is the author most recently of *New Worlds, Ancient Texts: The Power of Tradition and the Shock of Discovery* (Harvard University Press).

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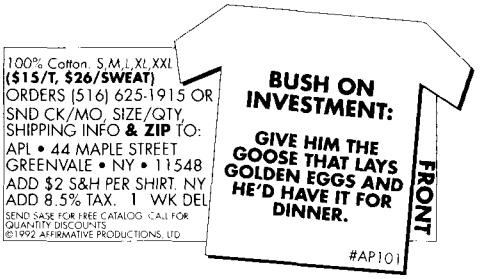
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HOMESTEAD DIARIST

Fruit salad

THE CATASTROPHE, IT SEEMS, struck a zone of advanced media consciousness. Survivors of Hurricane Andrew emerged from their fractured dwellings to spray-paint sound bites on the wreckage for out-of-town camera crews and reporters. On the road from Miami, roofless houses come into view bearing witticisms like: "Andrew Thanks—NOT" and "Andrew the ultimate blow job." Driving deeper into the apocalyptic landscape of denuded trees and Mix-Mastered debris, one finds variations on the theme of "Looters shot, no wake" and ironic reprises of real estate come-ons: "400 dollars moves you in" and "If you lived here you would be home." It seems sad that the victims of the most stark and authentic of events—a natural disaster—now feel the need to vie for attention with advertising slogans. Grief has gone from public spectacle to public relations. But it makes some sense for South Florida to market its tragedy. National media coverage—now diminishing fast—is the area's best hope for a share of limited outside aid. On CNN, Homestead is campaigning against Bosnia, Somalia, Nicaragua, and now Kauai too, for the sympathy vote.

AT THE SCENE, QUESTIONS OF what actually happened become even murkier. A correspondent for Miami's Channel 7 reports live from a trailer park where she says twenty-one of the fifty-five people who died during the storm were killed. Nineteen, she said, perished during a suicidal "Hurricane Party." I heard no other reference to this grim event. According to the *Miami Herald*, the death toll was fifteen. *The New York Times* makes it thirty-eight. There's a similar variety in the numbers of homeless people, damaged homes, lost jobs, and so forth. The desire for numbers is powerful, but we will probably never know the real ones. Homestead had one of the least settled, most poorly documented populations in the country. It was the product of an economic boomlet that accounted for the growth of trailer parks, migrant labor camps, and retirement villages. The biggest victims of the storm were transplanted people; many were refugees whose immigration status and connection to the area were tenuous to begin with. With no stakes left to pull up, many simply walked away. One day an Oldsmobile with its roof bashed in pulled up to my sister's fruit farm. It carried an old Mexican man with an injured hand, his daughter, who used to babysit for my nieces, and her husband. Their home and fruit-packing jobs were no more. They were moving North again, with no fixed destination, in search of better luck. Steinbeck might have called it the Limes of Wrath.

FEW FLORIDIANS SEEM TO WANT to discuss the issue of responsibility. A report that wind speeds reached 200 mph was greeted with relief, as if to say, you see, nothing can withstand a force like that. Survivors want to believe that the storm was an equal opportunity destroyer, meting out punishment at random, regardless of social station. Yet to drive around the wreckage was to see damage relative mostly to wealth, and secondarily to the quality of the construction. Some brick and stone houses lost roofs and windows, but they stood. Older wooden houses remained substantially intact. But new clapboard tract homes were a tortured mess, and trailers simply came apart. Evidence is now surfacing that building inspectors didn't inspect, and developers developed political connections that allowed them to break the rules. This is becoming a national story. But people in Homestead don't really want to hear it. It is as if shoddy construction in the hurricane zone was a family shame rather than somebody's fault.

PRESIDENT BUSH APPEARS TO HAVE made two mistakes. The first was to wait four days before sending in the Army. I'm not sure where the survivors would be without it. The Army not only keeps the peace and brings a sense of security; it provides hot meals, clean water, shelter, and essential information. The sight of a military construction brigade replacing the roof on the school my nieces attend was the most inspiring I have seen during my stay. Bush's second mistake is his failure to appoint some high-profile person to direct the recovery. FEMA, run by a political crony of John Sununu's, is invisible and seemingly useless in coordinating the relief effort. To direct the recovery, and to dispel the feeling of chaos and hopelessness that still envelops South Dade County, the president should appoint a hurricane czar, answerable to him, and available to Andrew's victims.

MY SISTER KIKI AND HER HUSBAND, Marc, moved here twelve years ago to raise fruit. They came because Homestead, on the edge of the Everglades, is the only part of the country with a climate suitable for the tropical crops Marc wanted to grow. A horticultural visionary and a fruit obsessive, he has pioneered the North American cultivation of lychees, carambolas, atemoyas, sugar apples, jackfruit, mamey, and other delicious things you've never tasted. Until recently, his family's existence was Edenic; surrounded by an endless variety of trees, my nieces could name and describe more kinds of fruit by age 4 than most people can at 40. On the eve of the storm their groves were thriving—they rushed to harvest what they could of a 100,000-pound crop of longans, an Asian fruit similar to lychees, which was their first in five years. By comparison with some others, Kiki and Marc were truly lucky. They, their four small children, and pets were unharmed. Though their house suffered some redecoration (the patio, rebuilt as a porch, is a patio once again), it's habitable. They have generator power, bottled water, and a cellular phone. But their 175 acres of lush greenery has been, as Marc simply puts it, "laid flat."

LIKE MOST OF HIS FELLOW FRUIT farmers, my brother-in-law rejected insurance for his crop and trees as too expensive. Thus his only hope for rebuilding his business is the government. Working against him is the fact that devastated Florida lychee growers don't tug at the heartstrings quite the way Kansas wheat farmers do. Working in his favor is that this is an election year, and the bailout bidding war is already under way. But my brother-in-law is not the type to gloom around waiting to see what help is coming. Manic in normal times, he is now in a state of productive hysteria. He has been putting in fourteen-hour days with his crew since the storm, clearing dead trees and administering first aid to live ones, mending sprinkler lines and refueling the diesel generator that is his family's only source of power for the foreseeable future. He has no income, and it will probably be five years before his farm looks again as it did on August 23. Still, a lot of trees survived. By the time they return to bear fruit, maybe Safeway will know what white sapotes are.

JACOB WEISBERG

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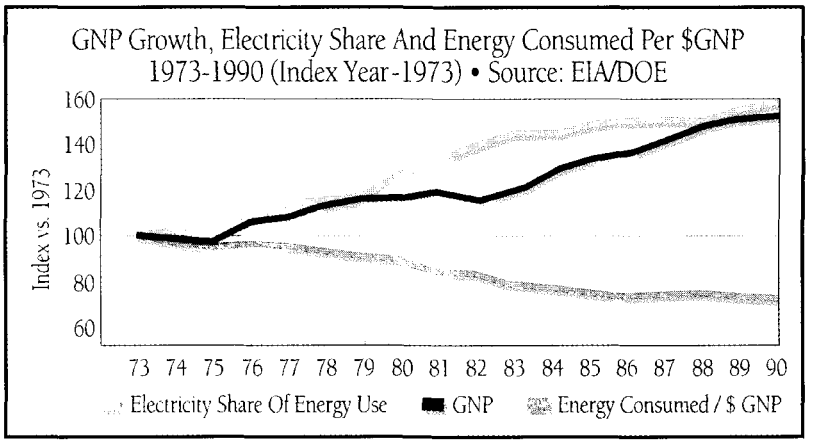
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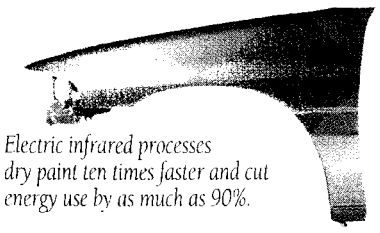

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